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## Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	10/17 Historic October heat shatters records
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/10/17/pacific-northwest-record-heat-smoke/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/10/17/pacific-northwest-record-heat-smoke/</a>

Temperatures soared Sunday in the Pacific Northwest as Seattle broke its long-standing record for the hottest day this late in the season, reaching 88 degrees. Dry, gusty conditions helped spread fires burning over the region, which released plumes of smoke, fouling regional air quality.

This is the third historic heat event to hit the Pacific Northwest in two years, as human-caused climate change boosts temperatures ever higher.

The record-shattering heat broke Seattle's previous Oct. 16 record high by a staggering 16 degrees. It was the city's second-warmest October day in 130 years. The only hotter October day occurred on Oct. 1, 1987, when it was 89 degrees.

Before Sunday, the latest it had previously reached 80 degrees in Seattle was Oct. 14 (in 1961).

"It still feels like summer never ended," said Seattle resident Adam Flash. "The stereotypically 'rainy city' hasn't rained in months." Less than half an inch of rain has fallen in the city since July.

Summerlike temperatures also baked Portland, Ore., which reached a record 86 degrees Sunday, its fifth day in a row in the 80s. On Saturday, it soared to 87, its highest temperature on record so late in the season. The city has set record highs on seven days this month, [reaching at least 80 degrees on 12 days](#), doubling the previous October record of six such days.

Several other cities in the Pacific Northwest set record highs Sunday, including Vancouver (86 degrees), Olympia (85) and Bellingham (80) in Washington, and Hillsboro (86) and Troutdale (83) in Oregon.

Unusually warm air aloft and easterly winds causing warm, dry air to descend from the mountains are creating a perfect recipe for temperatures to increase throughout the day, said meteorologist Dana Felton of the National Weather Service forecast office in Seattle.

The high temperatures, low humidity and breezy conditions fueled fires already burning in the Cascade Mountains and helped ignite new blazes.

"It's very, very, very unusual for us to have fires going in October," Felton, who has lived in Seattle for 36 years, told The Washington Post.

The National Weather Service in Portland warned Friday that conditions were "favorable" for "rapid fire spread." It urged residents to obey all burn restrictions and advised against motor vehicles idling over dry grass.

Satellite imagery showed blazes emitting smoke in Oregon and Washington.

Winds from the east pushed the worst of the smoke from the fires in the mountains into residential areas throughout the Northwest. Air quality across much of the Puget Sound region and coastal Washington ranged from "unhealthy for sensitive groups" to "unhealthy for everyone" on Saturday, according to the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency. Near the Cascades, air quality was predicted to reach "very unhealthy or worse" levels.

People outside for any length of time on Saturday experienced sore throats or chest tightness, Felton said. "It just wasn't a good day to be outside for very long."

Flash said residents in the Seattle area could feel, see and smell the pollutants in the air. "It definitely isn't comfortable being outside," he said.

[Air quality alerts](#) remain in effect through Thursday in western Oregon and Washington, including Portland and Seattle.

	<p>“Pollutants in smoke can cause burning eyes, runny nose, aggravate heart and lung diseases, and aggravate other serious health problems,” the National Weather Service cautioned. “Limit outdoor activities and keep children indoors if it is smoky.”</p> <p>Winds from the west might improve air quality and push the smoke out intermittently, but the smoke is likely to hover over the region until Friday, Felton predicted.</p> <p>While smoke might linger, the heat has mostly exited. In Seattle, forecast highs this week are mainly in the 60s, and there’s a chance of rain Friday. Portland is forecast to be mostly in the 70s, although it may nicker 80 one more time on Wednesday, the Weather Service predicts.</p> <p>While it was historically warm in the Pacific Northwest over the weekend, unusually cool weather invaded the Upper Midwest and Great Lakes, which experienced some of their first snowflakes of the season.</p> <p>This latest bout of heat in the Pacific Northwest is the third to occur in just over a year’s time. <a href="#">To end July</a>, Seattle tied a record for its longest stretch with highs at or above 90 degrees. Portland also experienced a record-long stretch of exceptional heat, with a full week of consecutive days at or above 95 degrees.</p> <p>In June 2021, an unprecedented heat wave scorched the Pacific Northwest. Portland and Seattle <a href="#">set all-time highs</a> of 116 and 108 degrees, respectively. Scientists concluded that such high temperatures were “<a href="#">virtually impossible</a>” without factoring in the effects of climate change.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Retired brass take top jobs foreign govts</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/interactive/2022/veterans-us-foreign-jobs-saudi-arabia/?hpid=hp_most-read_p004_f003_1">https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/interactive/2022/veterans-us-foreign-jobs-saudi-arabia/?hpid=hp_most-read_p004_f003_1</a>
GIST	<p>More than 500 retired U.S. military personnel — including scores of generals and admirals — have taken lucrative jobs since 2015 working for foreign governments, mostly in countries known for human rights abuses and political repression, according to a Washington Post investigation.</p> <p>In Saudi Arabia, for example, 15 retired U.S. generals and admirals have worked as paid consultants for the Defense Ministry since 2016. The ministry is led by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom’s de facto ruler, who U.S. intelligence agencies say approved the 2018 killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, a Washington Post contributing columnist, as part of a brutal crackdown on dissent.</p> <p>Saudi Arabia’s paid advisers have included retired Marine Gen. James L. Jones, a national security adviser to President Barack Obama, and retired Army Gen. Keith Alexander, who led the National Security Agency under Obama and President George W. Bush, according to documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act.</p> <p>Others who have worked as consultants for the Saudis since Khashoggi’s murder include a retired four-star Air Force general and a former commanding general of U.S. troops in Afghanistan.</p> <p>Most of the retired U.S. personnel have worked as civilian contractors for Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and other Persian Gulf monarchies, playing a critical, though largely invisible, role in upgrading their militaries.</p> <p>All the while, the gulf countries’ security forces have continued to commit human rights abuses at home and beyond their borders. With shared intelligence, aerial refueling and other support from the U.S. government and contractors, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have intervened in Yemen’s civil war to disastrous effect, triggering a global humanitarian crisis and killing thousands of civilians, according to United Nations investigators.</p> <p>Foreign governments have long advanced their interests in Washington by paying Americans as lobbyists, lawyers, political consultants, think tank analysts and public relations advisers. But the hiring of retired</p>

U.S. military personnel for their expertise and political clout has accelerated over the past decade as oil-rich gulf monarchies have splurged on defense spending and strengthened their security partnerships with the Pentagon.

Congress permits retired troops as well as reservists to work for foreign governments if they first obtain approval from their branch of the armed forces and the State Department. But the U.S. government has fought to keep the hirings secret. For years, it withheld virtually all information about the practice, including which countries employ the most retired U.S. service members and how much money is at stake.

To shed light on the matter, The Post sued the Army, the Air Force, the Navy, the Marine Corps and the State Department in federal court under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). After a two-year legal battle, The Post obtained more than 4,000 pages of documents, including case files for about 450 retired soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines.

The documents show that foreign governments pay handsomely for U.S. military talent, with salary and benefit packages reaching six and, sometimes, seven figures — far more than what most American service members earn while on active duty. At the top of the scale, active four-star generals earn \$203,698 a year in basic pay.

In comparison, the government of Australia has given consulting deals worth more than \$10 million to several former senior U.S. Navy officials. A consulting firm owned by six retired Pentagon officials and military officers negotiated a \$23.6 million contract with Qatar, a Persian Gulf sheikhdom that hosts a major U.S. air base, though the proposal later fell through. In Azerbaijan, a retired U.S. Air Force general was offered a consulting gig at a rate of \$5,000 a day.

Retired generals and admirals command the most money, but former enlisted personnel can also collect hefty foreign paychecks on top of their U.S. military pensions, records show.

Saudi Arabia hired a former Navy SEAL to work as a special operations adviser for \$258,000 a year. The UAE gave annual compensation packages worth more than \$200,000 to helicopter pilots and \$120,000 to aircraft mechanics. In Indonesia, a government-owned mining firm employed a retired U.S. Marine master sergeant as a transportation consultant at a rate of \$500 a day, plus living expenses.<sup>2</sup>

Many U.S. generals and admirals have profited from connections built during wartime by later working for Middle Eastern countries where they were once stationed. Records show that a few American officers even negotiated jobs with foreign governments while they were still on active duty.

Military officials redacted the pay packages for retired generals and admirals, as well as the names of lower-ranking personnel. In legal motions, U.S. officials argued that releasing the information would violate former service members' privacy and could subject them to "embarrassment and harassment" and "unfairly harm their public reputation."

The Post identified some of the names and redacted details through reporting. It has continued to sue the armed forces and the State Department to obtain the rest of the information.

In September, U.S. District Judge Amit P. Mehta ruled largely in favor of The Post and ordered the government to release the pay packages and other withheld material.

In his order, Mehta called the government's privacy arguments "unconvincing." In particular, he added, "the public has a right to know if high-ranking military leaders are taking advantage of their stations — or might be perceived to be doing so — to create employment opportunities with foreign governments in retirement."<sup>3</sup>

An attorney for the Justice Department said it was considering an appeal of the judge's decision.

The Project On Government Oversight (POGO), a nonprofit watchdog group based in Washington, filed a similar public-records lawsuit against the State Department to learn more about how former U.S. service

members are selling their military expertise to foreign powers. POGO shared the documents it received from the State Department with The Post.

Brandon Brockmyer, POGO's director of investigations and research, said retired senior military officers often testify before Congress and appear on television to debate national security, but rarely divulge whether they are on a foreign government's payroll.

"The public is working on the assumption that their sole loyalty is to the United States," he said. "The public has the right to know whether and how a foreign power has access to their expertise."

#### Prohibited without permission

Under federal law, retired U.S. military personnel — generally defined as those who served at least 20 years in uniform and are entitled to a pension — are restricted from receiving anything of value from foreign governments that could compromise their sworn allegiance to the United States.

The prohibition stems from the foreign emoluments clause of the Constitution, which forbids federal officeholders to accept gifts, jobs or titles "from any King, Prince, or foreign State" without the consent of Congress. The law applies to military retirees because they can be recalled to active duty at any time. In 1977, Congress delegated the authority to approve veterans' foreign work to the Pentagon and State Department.

Those approvals are necessary before the retirees can accept any compensation, even travel expenses, from a foreign government or state-owned company. Retirees may work only as civilians, not as uniformed personnel.

Those seeking authorization for foreign work must also pass a background check and counterintelligence review. The State Department and the armed forces have wide latitude to deny any application they think "would adversely affect the foreign relations of the United States." But The Post investigation found that approval is almost automatic. Of the more than 500 requests submitted since 2015, about 95 percent were granted.

The armed forces rely on retired military personnel to self-report their intent to work for foreign governments. Many veterans don't bother. The Post identified scores of retirees on LinkedIn who say they have taken military contracting jobs in the Persian Gulf, but for whom there is no record of federal approval.

There is no criminal penalty for violating the law. Enforcement is almost nonexistent.

The Defense Department can withhold retirement pay from those who ignore the rules. But the Defense Finance and Accounting Service, which administers military payrolls, has docked the pensions of "fewer than five" people, according to Steve Burghardt, an agency spokesman. He declined to identify the individuals, specify the time frame or provide other details, citing privacy concerns.

Documents show that one case involved retired Army Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, 63, who briefly served as national security adviser to President Donald Trump. An investigation by the Defense Department's inspector general found that Flynn collected \$449,807 from Russian and Turkish interests in 2015, one year after he retired from the Army, but failed to clear his work with U.S. officials.

Flynn's unauthorized work for foreign governments came to light after he was photographed sitting next to Russian President Vladimir Putin at a 2015 gala in Moscow celebrating the 10th anniversary of Russia Today, or RT, a propaganda arm of the Kremlin. RT paid Flynn \$38,557 to travel to Moscow and speak at the event.

Flynn's ties to Russian officials led to his downfall. In 2017, he pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about his contacts with the Russian ambassador to the United States. Trump pardoned him three years later.

The inspector general opened an investigation into Flynn's work for foreign governments in 2017, but the case took five years to resolve. In May, the Army ordered him to forfeit the \$38,557 that he received from the Moscow trip. But Army officials decided, without explanation, not to penalize him for the remaining \$411,250 he collected from Russia and Turkey.

Flynn's work for Russia helped prompt Congress to pass legislation in 2019 and 2020 requiring the Pentagon to submit annual reports to lawmakers about retired generals and admirals who work for foreign powers. Since then, the Pentagon has complied, but its reports include only a few lines of information and do not name the generals and admirals.

Of the 500 cases reported to the armed forces and State Department since 2015, only one involved Russia. In that instance, a retired Air Force colonel sought — and received — permission in March 2020 to take a \$300,000 job as an executive with a satellite-launch company based in the United States but majority-owned by the Russian government.

The documents released in response to The Post's lawsuits include no other instances of retired military personnel seeking to work for nations that the U.S. government categorizes as "foreign adversaries," such as China, North Korea, Iran, Cuba or Venezuela.

#### **'We did real, serious, detailed work'**

Almost two-thirds of the jobs taken by U.S. veterans have been in the Middle East and North Africa, where governments pay top dollar for American military expertise honed by two decades of war and counterterrorism operations in the Arab world.

Documents show that 25 retirees from the Air Force, Army, Navy and Marine Corps were granted permission to take jobs in Saudi Arabia. Most were high-ranking officers who received job offers to serve as consultants to the Saudi Defense Ministry.

Since 2015, the ministry has been ruled by Prince Mohammed, whose leadership has upended the status quo in the Middle East.

Two months after Mohammed became defense minister at age 29, Saudi Arabia led a coalition of regional forces — with intelligence, refueling and logistical support from the United States — that intervened militarily in Yemen's civil war. The move further destabilized the kingdom's much poorer neighbor, and an estimated 375,000 people have died in the fighting or of hunger.

In June 2017, Mohammed amassed even more power when his father, 82-year-old King Salman, shook up the Saudi line of succession and named him crown prince, or heir apparent. Mohammed quickly seized control of the kingdom's institutions and sidelined potential competitors to the throne, arresting more than 200 princes and other prominent Saudis.

He also cracked down on dissenters outside the kingdom.

In October 2018, a team of Saudi assassins flew from Riyadh to Istanbul to silence Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi-born journalist who had criticized the crown prince in opinion columns in The Post. Khashoggi was lured into the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul, where the hit squad killed him and dismembered his corpse with a bone saw, according to a Turkish government investigation.

Saudi officials first denied any knowledge of what happened to Khashoggi. Later, they admitted that Saudi agents were responsible and blamed them for carrying out a "rogue operation" without the crown prince's knowledge. But U.S. intelligence agencies concluded Mohammed had ordered the killing and noted that seven members of the hit squad served on his personal security detail.

A prominent beneficiary of Mohammed's reign has been 78-year-old James L. Jones, the retired general who served as Obama's national security adviser and had been commandant of the Marine Corps. Jones

owns two Virginia-based consulting firms — Ironhand Security LLC and Jones Group International LLC — that have held contracts to advise the Saudi Defense Ministry.

Jones applied for authorization to work for the Saudis in November 2016 and received U.S. approval four months later, documents show. In an interview, Jones said he was approached by Adel al-Jubeir, Saudi Arabia's foreign minister, who asked him to meet with Mohammed during the prince's visit to the United States that year to discuss the possibility of consulting for the Defense Ministry.

"The crown prince basically said that he was concerned about the amount of money that Saudi Arabia was spending on military hardware and equipment, as opposed to capabilities," Jones said. "[He] was wondering if there was something that we could do to help them in transforming their Ministry of Defense and the armed forces into something that would be more useful and less expensive."

Saudi Arabia spends more on its military than any other nonnuclear power in the world. In 2021, its defense budget exceeded \$50 billion — roughly the same as in Britain, a country with nuclear arms.

Jones said he agreed to conduct an organizational assessment of the Saudi armed forces for Prince Mohammed starting in 2017, but only after checking with officials at the White House, State Department and Defense Department and obtaining their support. "Had that not been the case, I would not have done it," he added.

To carry out the project, Jones assembled a team of about a dozen former senior Pentagon officials, including William S. Cohen, who served as secretary of defense in the Clinton administration. A spokesman for Cohen said he worked on the team for about a year.

Documents show that four retired generals obtained U.S. permission in 2017 to work with Jones's team in Riyadh: Charles Wald, a four-star Air Force general; Michael Barbero, a three-star Army general; Arnold Punaro, a two-star Marine general; and John Doucette, a one-star Air Force general.

Barbero and Doucette did not respond to requests for comment. Punaro, 76, a longtime Pentagon adviser and former congressional staffer, said he worked for Jones as a consultant from April 2017 to April 2018, traveling to Riyadh every month or two.

"We did real, serious, detailed work," Punaro said, adding that the group briefed U.S. officials on their progress. He declined to say how much he was paid, citing a confidentiality clause in his contract with Ironhand Security.

Wald, 74, spent 35 years in the Air Force, including as deputy commander of U.S. forces in Europe and as a forward air controller and F-16 pilot who flew in combat in Vietnam and Bosnia. He headed Jones Group International's business in the Middle East until last year. In an interview, he said he felt it was important to help the Saudis improve their military so the United States didn't have to act as their primary protector. "It's time for the U.S. not to be doing all the defense of the Middle East," he said.

Though the U.S. military has refused to disclose the compensation packages earned by retired generals, other public records show that the Saudis pay their consultants generously. Four lower-ranking retired officers working for Jones — two Marine colonels, an Army colonel and a Navy captain — earned salaries ranging from \$200,000 to \$300,000 to advise the Saudi Defense Ministry. Military officials redacted those officers' identities, asserting that the public had no right to the information.

Jones's companies continue to advise the Saudis on how to reorganize their military command structure so that the armed forces can operate jointly instead of as separate fiefdoms, documents show. Traditionally, the primary mission of the Saudi military and security services has been to guarantee the protection and survival of the al-Saud family, with different princes controlling different branches as competing power centers.

Officials with the Saudi Embassy in Washington did not respond to requests for an interview.

Because of Saudi Arabia's vast oil deposits, U.S. presidents since Franklin D. Roosevelt have pledged to help defend the kingdom militarily. Saudi Arabia buys more U.S. weapons than any other country in the world by far. More than 200 active-duty American troops are stationed in Saudi Arabia as trainers and advisers.

But Washington has long struggled to reconcile its robust security partnership with Saudi Arabia and the kingdom's troubling record on human rights.

The U.S.-Saudi security partnership came under severe strain after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks — 15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudi nationals — and again over the war in Yemen, and then again after Khashoggi's assassination. During his 2020 presidential campaign, Joe Biden promised to make Saudi Arabia "pay the price and make them, in fact, the pariah they are."

Yet, less than two years later, President Biden traveled to Jiddah, Saudi Arabia, and exchanged a fist bump with Prince Mohammed to reaffirm the relationship. During their meeting at the Al Salam Royal Palace, the two leaders addressed a range of issues, including oil production and human rights.

Since then, the relationship has again hit the skids. On Oct. 5, Saudi Arabia, Russia and other members of the OPEC Plus cartel announced they would slash oil production to raise prices. The decision infuriated the Biden administration. It accused the Saudis of siding with Moscow, whose oil is under Western sanctions because of the war in Ukraine. Biden warned that the Saudi government will face "consequences," but didn't say how.

#### **After Khashoggi, business as usual**

Another high-profile senior officer who has done business with Saudi Arabia is Keith Alexander, 70, who served as director of the National Security Agency as well as the first head of the U.S. Cyber Command.

In July 2018, Alexander's consulting firm, IronNet Cybersecurity, signed a partnership agreement with the Saudis to develop a new institution: the Prince Mohammed bin Salman College of Cyber Security. The college billed itself as the kingdom's first training program for cyberwarfare and was established under the direction of Saud al-Qahtani, an influential aide to the crown prince.

Qahtani also oversaw a network of computer hacking and surveillance operations that targeted the crown prince's critics and enemies around the world, including Khashoggi. U.S. officials have accused him of managing the plot against the Post contributor. In November 2018, the Treasury Department imposed sanctions on Qahtani, declaring that he "was part of the planning and execution of the operation that led to the killing."

Yet two months later, during the Trump administration, the State Department approved Alexander's request to help develop the cyberwarfare college and serve on its board of advisers, documents show. U.S. officials redacted details on how much money Alexander stood to earn.

Alexander, who is the founder, chief executive and chairman of IronNet, declined to comment. Bridget Bell, a spokeswoman for IronNet, said that the firm's contract with the Saudis "focused on the development of the college's educational efforts" and that the arrangement lasted until 2020.

Alexander was originally supposed to serve on the college's board of advisers, but he never attended any meetings "nor worked directly on the company's contract," Bell said. She added that Alexander and IronNet did not "have any interaction" with Qahtani.

Alexander has also served as a cybersecurity consultant to other foreign governments. Since 2017, he has sought U.S. approval for four separate deals to advise the governments of Singapore and Japan.<sup>14</sup> Many U.S. companies ceased doing business with Saudi Arabia in the weeks after Khashoggi's murder, including lobbyists and public relations firms that had represented the kingdom in Washington. At the time, a spokesperson for Jones told the Daily Beast that the retired Marine general was "disturbed" and



“horrificed” by Khashoggi’s death, and downplayed his firms’ work in Riyadh, saying one contract with the Saudis had recently ended and a second was scheduled to expire soon.

In fact, Jones’s firms not only remained in Saudi Arabia but expanded their partnership with the Defense Ministry after Khashoggi’s slaying.

In his interview with The Post, Jones said he was “very shocked and surprised at what evidently happened” to Khashoggi. But he said Jones Group International applied for, and accepted, more work from the Saudi Defense Ministry in 2019 because “we received encouragement” from the Trump administration to do so. He said his companies now hold four Saudi contracts and employ 53 Americans in Riyadh. Of those, eight are retired generals and admirals, and 32 are lower-ranking military retirees.

“Nobody ever came to us and said, ‘Hey, we think you ought to pull out,’ ” Jones added. “I don’t know what the alternative would have been if we had pulled away. I was worried that [the Saudis] would possibly drift off to other relationships with the Chinese and the Russians, and I didn’t think that would be very good.”

But Wald, the retired four-star Air Force general, said he and other Jones Group consultants debated whether to stop working with the Saudis after Khashoggi’s assassination. “We discussed that almost every day,” he recalled. “We asked ourselves, are we basically turning a blind eye toward immorality? Or supporting a legitimate government?” In the end, they decided to stay.

Wald said Saudi Arabia had made “measurable progress” on reforming its military by the time he stopped working for Jones Group in September 2021. Yet he said he was glad to leave Riyadh. “I certainly don’t regret that I’m not there anymore,” he added. “The Saudis aren’t always easy to work with.”

In recent years, Jones Group International has expanded into other foreign markets. In 2019, Jones, Wald and two retired Army lieutenant generals working for the company — Michael Barbero and Douglas Lute — applied for and obtained U.S. approval to advise the Libyan government on the disarmament and reintegration of militia fighters, documents show.

Jones Group was hired by the U.N.-backed government in Tripoli at the time. U.S. military officials redacted information on how much money Libyan officials paid the retired generals. But a retired Army colonel who applied for federal approval to work for Libya with Jones Group reported that he expected to earn \$10,000 a month.

In his application, Wald noted that when he was an Air Force colonel, he planned Operation El Dorado Canyon, the 1986 U.S. airstrikes on Libya that nearly killed then-ruler Moammar Gaddafi. Wald told The Post that Jones Group worked in Libya for only a few months.

“Libya is a nut case,” he said. “Their government is ineffective. Their military is ineffective. ... Their military is basically a ragtag group of militias.”

Jones said his company stopped working in Libya at the State Department’s request because of the country’s political instability. Lute, who served under Jones in the Obama White House as a deputy national security adviser, declined to comment. Barbero, an infantry officer who held senior command positions in Iraq and retired from the Army in 2013, did not respond to requests for an interview.

### **Rubber-stamping the requests**

Officials from the Air Force, Army, Navy and Marine Corps declined interview requests about their approval processes for foreign employment. But records show they rarely reject a job request.

R. Philip Deavel, a lawyer who oversaw the Air Force program from 2012 to 2016, said in an interview that he denied a small number of applications by retired personnel to work for “Third World countries with a reputation for brutality in conflict.” He declined to name the countries.

Overall, however, Deavel said he viewed most of the job opportunities as supportive of U.S. foreign policy. He said the countries involved were almost always friendly to Washington and looking for American expertise to make their militaries more professional. “If you embed with another military as trainers, it may not make that country into Switzerland, but it won’t make it worse,” he said.

Once the armed forces approve employment requests, the State Department’s Bureau of Political-Military Affairs performs a final review. But records produced by the government suggest that the bureau functions as little more than a rubber stamp, authorizing all but five cases since 2015.

State Department officials declined interview requests from The Post to discuss their criteria for approving applications from retired military personnel to work for the Saudis and other foreign governments. But in a written response to questions, the department said it took human rights considerations into account and was “confident” that security cooperation with the Saudis “will serve to elevate respect for human rights.”

“The President has made it clear that the rule of law and respect for human rights are front and center in U.S. foreign policy. We will continue decades of U.S. partnership to help strengthen Saudi Arabia’s defenses through security cooperation, defense trade, training, and exercises, but we are also clear-eyed about the challenges ahead,” it said.

One of the few cases denied by the State Department concerned a retired Navy commander who landed a \$291,000-a-year job with Saudi Arabian Military Industries (SAMI), a state-owned arms supplier, as its director for weapons systems. The Navy approved the request in August 2020, but the State Department overruled the decision four months later, concluding that the arrangement would “adversely affect the foreign relations of the United States.” No further explanation was given.

SAMI was founded by the Saudi government in 2017. It is wholly owned by the Public Investment Fund, a \$620 billion sovereign wealth fund controlled by Prince Mohammed. SAMI’s mission is to help the kingdom create a domestic arms industry and reduce its dependence on the United States and other foreign suppliers.

In August 2020, the Navy gave preliminary approval to another retired officer — Timothy Carter, a former executive with Northrop Grumman — to take a job with SAMI as its executive vice president for weapons and missiles. Carter’s annual compensation was even more lucrative: \$514,200 in salary and living expenses, plus a yearly bonus worth up to \$330,000.

What happened to Carter’s application after that is unclear. A Navy spokeswoman said the service has been waiting more than two years for the State Department to make a final determination. The State Department did not respond to questions about the case. Carter did not respond to requests for comment. Regardless, Carter didn’t wait for a green light from U.S. officials before he began working for the Saudis. SAMI announced his hiring on Sept. 4, 2019, almost a full year before he received tentative approval from the Navy. Documents show Navy officials were aware he had already taken the job.

Under federal law, the Defense Department can force retirees to pay back any foreign money they receive before their applications are approved. But there is no evidence the armed forces have ever imposed penalties in such cases.

### **Working without approval**

The Post found that many military retirees take foreign jobs or gifts without notifying the U.S. government at all. The armed forces and the State Department have no mechanism to identify such cases. Unless rulebreakers come to public attention — as did Flynn — or someone reports them, they have no reason to fear getting in trouble.

Karl Eikenberry, 70, is a retired three-star Army general who commanded U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan and later served as the U.S. ambassador in Kabul. Since 2021, Eikenberry has also described himself in multiple online [biographies](#) as a [senior adviser](#) to the Saudi Defense Ministry. But there is no

record of his seeking clearance for the job from the Army or State Department. He did not respond to messages seeking comment.

By examining LinkedIn profiles and other publicly available sources, The Post identified 20 other retired officers — including four generals and admirals — who reported working for Jones Group International or Ironhand Security as advisers to the Saudi military but for whom there is no record of federal approval.

Among them are Edward Cashman, a retired Navy rear admiral; Sean Jenkins, a retired Army major general; and Cathal O'Connor, a retired Navy rear admiral. All began working for Jones Group in 2021, within weeks of their retirement from the U.S. military.

None of the three responded to requests for comment. Jones said his employees are instructed to “complete all of the requirements that they need to do” before working with the Saudis.

Other generals have moved to Saudi Arabia for employment after they were forced to retire from the U.S. military for misconduct.

Bradley Becker, a retired Army three-star general, was hired by Jones Group International in September 2020 as a project manager in Riyadh. Becker’s military career [ended in 2019](#) after the Army relieved him of command for engaging in “an inappropriate relationship with a woman” while he was separated from his wife. Becker did not respond to messages seeking comment. Last year he told Task & Purpose, a news site that covers the military, that he did not commit adultery and was merely communicating with a woman while going through a divorce.

The rules about what foreign jobs require U.S. government approval are fuzzy and open to interpretation. The armed forces have said authorization is necessary if veterans work directly for a foreign government, or if foreign officials can exert control over their employment or compensation by a private firm.

Retirees who are assigned by large U.S. companies — such as Lockheed Martin or General Dynamics — to work with foreign governments are generally exempt. The distinction is that foreign governments cannot hire or fire those individuals, and that their employers can reassign them to other jobs if they fall out of favor with their foreign clients.

For example, retired Navy Rear Adm. Steven G. Smith worked in Riyadh from 2017 to 2020 as an adviser to the Defense Ministry under a contract with Booz Allen Hamilton, a major international consulting firm. Smith did not seek approval for the work from the Navy and the State Department. He told The Post he did not need it because he worked directly for Booz Allen “and was not involved in any contract issues with the Saudis.”

The military services have at times applied inconsistent standards on what qualifies as foreign control. The Marines, for example, have concluded that retirees who work for U.S. subsidiaries of firms owned by foreign governments do not need U.S. approval. Other services have said they do.

In May 2020, the Army denied an application by a retired officer who had a \$300,000-a-year job lined up with Jones Group International to serve as a consultant to the Saudi Defense Ministry. It cited disciplinary problems in his military record.

At the same time, the Army said it was “unclear” whether the officer needed U.S. authorization because he was working for Jones Group International, an American company. The Army informed the officer that if the Saudi government had “control over your activities,” then he could not take the job.

The Army redacted the name of the officer from the documents, but details of his service record match the biography of David Haight, another general who left the U.S. military under a cloud. Haight was demoted three ranks — from major general to lieutenant colonel — and forced to retire in 2016 over a personal misconduct scandal.

An Army investigation determined that Haight, a married Army Ranger who had served as a brigade commander in Afghanistan, embraced a “swinger lifestyle” and carried on an 11-year affair with a female government employee. Adultery is a punishable offense under military law, and Army officials said Haight’s sexual escapades put him at risk of blackmail.

Haight began work in Riyadh as a consultant to the Saudis in July 2019, eight months before the Army handed down its decision on his application, according to his LinkedIn profile. In a brief phone interview, Haight said he left the job in December 2021. He added that while he worked in an advisory capacity for the Saudi Defense Ministry, his contract was with Jones Group International.

Asked if he had any concerns about the Saudi government’s human rights record, Haight said Jones Group “was always very careful that our efforts were consistent with U.S. policy to bring stability to the Middle East” and to professionalize the Saudi military.

The distinction between state-controlled firms and independent ones is often blurry in nondemocratic countries, especially absolute monarchies such as Saudi Arabia, where the royal family dominates commerce and there is little transparency in the business sector.

In February, for example, a brand-new Saudi defense contractor — Scopa Industries Corp. LLC — opened for business with an ambitious agenda.

Describing itself as the kingdom’s “preeminent defense company,” Scopa said its purpose was “to meet the guidance” of Prince Mohammed by contributing to “the defense revolutionary process” and creating domestic jobs. The firm is owned by the Ajlan family, a conglomerate run by three billionaire brothers. In practice, however, Saudi companies cannot operate in the defense sector without the blessing of the crown prince.

Scopa Industries’ website features five American senior advisers: Barbero, retired Navy Vice Adm. Rich Brown, retired Rear Adm. Michael A. Brown, retired Army Col. Dominic Caraccilo and retired Air Force Col. Todd Harmer.

Harmer said in an email that his activities for Scopa Industries “are in full compliance with US laws and regulations,” but declined to comment further. The other American advisers to Scopa Industries did not respond to interview requests.

Another Saudi defense contractor, Vinnell Arabia LLC, employs hundreds of Americans to train the Saudi Arabian national guard. Vinnell Arabia is a joint venture of Northrop Grumman, the giant U.S. defense firm headquartered in Falls Church, Va., and Arab Builders for Trading, a Riyadh firm owned by a brother-in-law of the kingdom’s late King Abdullah IV.

As of 2015, a Northrop Grumman subsidiary owned 51 percent of Vinnell Arabia, according to court papers the company filed in response to a federal lawsuit in Virginia. But the Riyadh-based firm also submitted a declaration stating that it was subject only to Saudi law and that “no American employer — including Northrop Grumman — exerts any control over Vinnell Arabia.”

Documents show that none of Vinnell’s American employees have applied for permission from U.S. officials to train Saudi forces since at least 2015. Vinnell Arabia did not respond to a request for comment.

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HEADLINE	10/18 Covid swarm could fuel winter surge
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/10/18/covid-variants-xbb-bq1-bq11/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/10/18/covid-variants-xbb-bq1-bq11/</a>
GIST	For two years, coronavirus variants emerged, <a href="#">one by one</a> , sweeping the globe.

But this fall and winter are expected to be different: Instead of a single ominous variant lurking on the horizon, experts are nervously eyeing a swarm of viruses — and a new [evolutionary phase](#) in the pandemic.

This time, it's unlikely we will be barraged with a new collection of Greek alphabet variants. Instead, one or more of the multiple versions of the omicron variant that keep popping up could drive the next wave. They are different flavors of omicron, but eerily alike — adorned with a similar combination of mutations. Each new subvariant seems to outdo the last in its ability to dodge immune defenses.

“It is this constant evolutionary arms race we’re having with this virus,” said Jonathan Abraham, an assistant professor of microbiology at Harvard Medical School.

The pace of evolution is so fast that many scientists depend on Twitter to keep up. A month ago, scientists were worried about [BA.2.75](#), a variant that took off in South Asia and spawned a cloud of other concerning sublineages. In the United States, BA.4.6 and BF.7 have been slowly [picking up steam](#). A few weeks ago, [BQ.1.1](#) started to steal the spotlight — and still looks like a contender to take over this fall in Europe and North America. A lineage called [XBB](#) looms on the sidelines, and threatens to scramble the forecast.

To focus too much on any one possible variant is, many experts argue, missing the point. What matters is that all these new threats are accumulating mutations in similar spots in what's called the [receptor binding domain](#) — a key spot in the spike protein where virus-blocking antibodies dock. If those antibodies can't dock, they can't block. Each new mutation gives the virus a leg up in avoiding this [primary line of immune defense](#).

Most virologists demur when asked about which variant — or variants — will be infecting people this winter. That doesn't mean they think the virus is standing still.

Much of the world's population has gained a measure of immunity because of vaccinations and infections with omicron. That protection gave us the relative freedoms of the moment — with many people returning to normal life. But protection is fleeting for two key reasons: immunity wanes and the virus is changing. And then there's this: Monoclonal antibodies, targeted drugs that can be used as a treatment or to protect immunocompromised people who don't respond well to vaccines, are likely to be knocked out by future variants.

“It's important for people to understand that the fact there's not a Greek letter name that has come out does not mean the virus stopped evolving,” said Jesse Bloom, an expert on viral evolution at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, who described the evolutionary rate of SARS-CoV-2 as “strikingly rapid.”

Instead of worrying about which variant will win, or even focusing on particular mutations, many scientists have shifted to watching hotspots — specific sites on the virus, known by numbers like a street address, where any change in the virus's code might allow it to slip by the neutralizing antibodies that are a first line of defense.

The coronavirus spike protein is made up of about 1,300 building blocks called amino acids, and mutations that change even a single building block can make it harder for antibodies to block the virus. Instead of a Greek alphabet, scientists are maintaining shortlists of worrisome spots for mutation: 346, 444, 445, 452, 460, 486, 490.

Seeing so many lineages of the coronavirus develop similar constellations of genetic changes at these spots is a sign of convergent evolution — when different versions of the virus have slammed into the wall of immune defenses in the human population, and then come up with similar ways to get around them. That happens with influenza but is fairly new to SARS-CoV-2. And in the case of the coronavirus, the more mutations, the bigger advantage a new variant seems to have.

Cornelius Roemer, a computational biologist at the University of Basel in Switzerland, has been ranking the new omicron sublineages by how many mutations they have in the receptor binding domain.

XBB appears to be the best at evading immunity. Researchers in China have found that XBB can elude the protective antibodies generated by a breakthrough BA.5 infection, raising concern that fall boosters engineered to target the BA.4 and BA.5 versions of omicron may be quickly outpaced. Still, those booster shots remain the best tool on the shelf.

“We do not have a better choice at the current stage,” Yunlong Cao, a scientist at the Biomedical Pioneering Innovation Center in Peking University in Beijing, said in an email.

On Friday, [data](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showed that BQ.1 and BQ.1.1 had grown to about 11 percent of the viruses sampled in the United States. Whether it is XBB, BQ.1.1, or some as yet unknown twist on omicron, most experts agree variants will help fuel a difficult fall and winter.

“These lineages are going to have a greater ability to reinfect people than what is currently circulating ... which is very likely to drive or contribute to infection waves over the winter,” Tom Peacock, a virologist at Imperial College London, said in an email.

It’s a matter of debate what will happen when one or more of them gets a toehold in a population with a protective layer of underlying immunity. Protection against the worst outcomes is likely to hold up, particularly if bolstered by boosters, many scientists predict.

Cases are ticking up in Europe already. Many scientists think the upswing is driven largely by factors such as children going back to school, people spending more time indoors and the seasonality of the virus. The variants may just be starting to contribute.

“We are certainly in a better place than we were many months ago; we are still in a downward trend” in the United States, said Anthony S. Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, who exhorted people to get an updated booster if eligible. “We need to watch and follow these things very carefully, because we want to make sure we have a good handle on what is going on with regard to the emergence of variants, and what impact they’re going to have on any trends we are going to see in winter.”

But the impact on society could still be considerable even with a surge in cases that doesn’t lead to a massive wave of hospitalizations.

“To put it in context, the summer wasn’t considered a wave — but at the same time, there were lots of issues with work absences, and that kind of thing did have an impact on the world as a whole,” said Manon Ragonnet-Cronin, a scientist at the University of Chicago. “Our primary measurement of how bad these waves are tends to be hospitalizations and deaths, but those other effects shouldn’t be discounted.”

There’s nothing certain about a late-fall wave — whether one will happen, what its magnitude might be or what could spark it. The new crop of variants clearly escapes immunity, but Justin Lessler, a professor of epidemiology at the University of North Carolina’s Gillings School of Public Health, said the question will be how that advantage plays out in the world.

“A strain can have a growth advantage compared to the other strains, but still not enough of an advantage to lead to a resurgent epidemic,” Lessler said.

What’s more predictable: Any variant that winds up dominating in coming months will probably challenge a key line of treatment and protection for people with compromised immune systems — the drugs known as monoclonal antibodies. Evusheld is a long-acting version used to prevent illness in people with compromised immune systems. Another monoclonal, [bebtelovimab](#), is used as a treatment.



The pharmaceutical companies making these drugs stress that they remain useful against variants that are prevalent now. But for many scientists, the writing is on the wall. The swarm on the horizon threatens to wipe out one or both of those therapies — and may even subvert the next generation of candidates yet to make it into the medicine cabinet.

Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, a major maker of monoclonal antibodies, paused start-up activities in late September on clinical trials for its new drug — pointing not to a particular new lineage of omicron but to a mutation at one of the hotspots.

“We ask that all start-up activities ... be paused to allow Regeneron to evaluate the new variant and its potential impact to our planned clinical development trials,” a company memo sent to investigators running the trials said.

Scientists are worried that Evusheld could be useless by the end of the year, as new [variants](#) take over. The Food and Drug Administration [warned this month](#) that the drug is unlikely to protect against infection from BA.4.6, a strain that represents about 12 percent of the viruses circulating in the United States.

Bebtelovimab, the monoclonal made by Lilly, could also face a ticking clock as yet other [mutations](#) threaten to undermine its effectiveness.

Companies can choose from many libraries of monoclonal antibody drugs, but questions about how to pick them, prove they work and whether they are safe have become more pressing as the drugs turned out to have a [short shelf life](#), because of the pace of viral evolution.

In an effort to make their drugs more variant-proof, companies are trying to design antibody products that are not similar to the dominant antibodies the human body naturally creates to rout the virus.

Laura Walker, chief scientific officer of Invivyd, a biotechnology company working on monoclonal antibody drugs, described one of the compounds her company is hoping to start testing in people in January as a “freak of nature” — because it binds to an unusual spot on the virus.

“You want to try and look ahead, and the question is: How far do those headlights go?” Walker said.

Unmitigated transmission of the virus will allow it to find vulnerable people — whether because of age or medical risk factors. It could also result in the wild-card scenario that many experts fear: A new and very different variant could emerge from some other branch of the coronavirus evolutionary tree.

A leading theory of omicron’s origin is that it evolved as the result of a long-term infection in an [immunocompromised](#) patient — and the possibility of a huge jump happening again can’t be ignored.

“If we sit on our hands and say, ‘Well, we are all fine,’ and forget about the vulnerable people who don’t make good immune responses, then that might increase the likelihood a new, scarier variant emerges,” Abraham, of Harvard, said. “I’m not sure if it’s going to happen this winter, but I think it’s likely. There’s still a lot of room for evolution.”

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HEADLINE	10/18 ‘Explosions’ triggered pipeline gas leaks
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/18/nord-stream-gas-leaks-denmark-says-powerful-explosions-behind-damage.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/18/nord-stream-gas-leaks-denmark-says-powerful-explosions-behind-damage.html</a>
GIST	A preliminary investigation into gas leaks from two underwater pipelines connecting Russia to Germany found “powerful explosions” caused the damage, Copenhagen Police said Tuesday.

<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	<p>The findings appeared to be similar to a crime scene investigation carried out by Sweden’s national security service earlier this month, which reinforced suspicions of “<a href="#">gross sabotage</a>.”</p> <p>A flurry of detonations on the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines on Sept. 26 sent gas spewing to the surface of the Baltic Sea. The explosions triggered four gas leaks at four locations — two in Denmark’s exclusive economic zone and two in Sweden’s exclusive economic zone.</p> <p>Danish police said a joint group, including The Norwegian Police Intelligence Service, would be set up to handle further investigations of the incidents.</p> <p>“It is still too early to say anything about the framework under which the international cooperation with e.g. Sweden and Germany will run, as it depends on several actors, including which authorities handle the case in the various countries,” the statement <a href="#">said</a> Tuesday.</p> <p>Danish police said it was not possible to say when the investigation was likely to be completed.</p> <p>Many in Europe suspect the Nord Stream gas leaks <a href="#">were the result of an attack</a>, particularly as it occurred during a bitter energy standoff between the European Union and Russia.</p> <p>The Kremlin has repeatedly dismissed claims it destroyed the pipelines, calling such allegations “stupid” and “absurd,” and claiming that it is the U.S. that had the most to gain from the gas leaks.</p> <p>The White House has denied any involvement in the suspected attack.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/17 Evacuations in wind-driven wildfire
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.axios.com/2022/10/17/us-wildfires-washington-state-evacuates-thousands">https://www.axios.com/2022/10/17/us-wildfires-washington-state-evacuates-thousands</a>
GIST	<p>A wind-driven wildfire exploded to 2,000 acres overnight before diminishing slightly to roughly 1,500 acres in southwest <a href="#">Washington state</a> as authorities ordered evacuations for thousands of homes.</p> <p><b>The latest:</b> By Monday night, the Nakia Creek Fire was burning across some 1,165 acres and was 5% contained. Evacuation zones <a href="#">had shrunk</a> since Sunday, according to the Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency. "Smoke was very heavy yesterday and even grounded aircraft fighting the fire," the agency said in an update.</p> <p><b>Thought bubble,</b> via <a href="#">Axios' Andrew Freedman</a>: The most dangerous wildfire weather conditions, which helped propel several large blazes in Washington state this weekend, have begun to shift. Slightly cooler, more humid air is present in western Washington in particular, helping firefighters to battle the flames.</p> <p>The strong easterly winds that dried out vegetation and yielded extreme fire behavior this weekend have died down. Temperatures are expected to remain milder than average through midweek, and by late this week, much cooler and rainy fall weather is forecast to arrive in the Pacific Northwest.</p> <p><b>The big picture:</b> There's an unusually high number of wildfires burning in the Pacific Northwest, Intermountain West and Canada, as much of the Western United States faces "above normal temperatures and minimum relative humidity," per the National Inter Agency Fire Center.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are "record high temperatures, dry weather, wildfire concerns and air quality issues across the Pacific Northwest continues," the National Weather Service said in a forecast update on Monday morning.</li> </ul> <p><b>By the numbers:</b> Washington's <a href="#">Nakia Creek Fire</a>, near Camas, east of Vancouver, which prompted Sunday's evacuation orders, is one of <a href="#">72 large fires</a> in the U.S., according to the NIFC's latest data.</p>



	<p><b>Zoom in:</b> Smoke from that Washington wildfire in eastern Clark County that's razed some 2,000 acres was "visible throughout the metropolitan area that Vancouver shares with Portland, Oregon," <a href="#">AP notes</a>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An air quality <a href="#">advisory</a> remained in place for Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley in southwestern British Columbia due to wildfires in Washington and Canada, per a Metro Vancouver <a href="#">tweet</a> Sunday evening.</li> </ul> <p><b>Zoom out:</b> 24 large fires were burning in Idaho, 22 in Montana, 14 in Washington and seven in Oregon, per the NIFC data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oklahoma has four large fires and California one — the monster <a href="#">Mosquito Fire</a> that's been active for 40 days, but which is now <a href="#">95% contained</a>.</li> </ul> <p><b>Context:</b> Scientific research shows <a href="#">climate change</a> is a <a href="#">key factor</a> in wildfire risk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Much of <a href="#">the U.S. West</a> is in the grip of a climate change-driven <a href="#">drought</a>, which has exacerbated fire risk, per <a href="#">Axios' Andrew Freedman</a>.</li> </ul> <p><b>What we're watching:</b> "The Northwest will remain warmer than normal over the next few days thanks to the continued presence of a staunch upper-level ridge," the National Weather Service said in an <a href="#">outlook</a> update on Monday morning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Some records may be tied or broken over the Pacific Northwest and Northern Rockies on Tuesday."</li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 Best time book holiday travel? Now</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/17/travel/when-to-book-holiday-travel.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/17/travel/when-to-book-holiday-travel.html</a>
GIST	<p>According to the travel industry, it's time to get nervous about the holidays, specifically Thanksgiving and Christmas travel.</p> <p>Travel's recovery, while good for the economy, means that reservations and rates for everything from flights to hotels, vacation rental homes and rental cars will likely be higher than last year, when the emergence of the omicron variant dashed many holiday plans, and in some cases even higher than in 2019.</p> <p>"The pent-up demand for travel in 2022 is alive and well as we head into the holidays," said Diana Hechler, the president of D. Tours Travel, an agency in Larchmont, New York.</p> <p><b>Flight patterns</b></p> <p>Historically, the holidays were always among the busiest and most expensive times to travel, and some predict this year will look more familiar than the past two.</p> <p>"What we're seeing from an airfare perspective is a renormalization," said Scott Keyes, the founder of Scott's Cheap Flights, a subscription service that finds inexpensive airfares. "Things look more like 2019 now than at any time since the pandemic began."</p> <p>He described it as a "smoothing out" of demand after the bust of the pandemic and the explosion of travel last spring, and a return to regular patterns, including consistent bumps in prices as the holidays get closer.</p> <p>In other words, the era of the last-minute flight deal is over.</p> <p>"The best time to have booked those Thanksgiving and Christmas flights was June and July, and the second best is basically now," Keyes said.</p> <p>Based on recent flight searches at the search engine Kayak, the average price for round-trip domestic travel during Thanksgiving week this year is \$468, up nearly 50% from last year, and 30% more than in 2019. New York City, Orlando, Florida, and Las Vegas were the most searched cities.</p>

The same data shows an even higher jump at Christmas, to \$574 for the average domestic flight during Christmas week, up 50% over pre-pandemic fares.

With more people working remotely, many travelers have more flexibility over when to fly. In that case, you may be able to shave a few dollars off airfares by following the advice of Expedia, the online travel agency. Its data shows that flyers can save 30%, on average, by flying on the Monday before Thanksgiving compared to the prior weekend.

Returning home post-feast, Friday, Nov. 25, and Monday, Nov. 28, are the cheapest days to fly, saving 5-10% compared to Sunday, Nov. 27.

Over Christmas week, Expedia found ticket prices are around 20% cheaper on Monday, Dec. 19, and Tuesday, Dec. 20, compared to Saturday, Dec. 17.

Based on 33 billion price quotes over the past five years, the booking app Hopper recommends making travel plans no later than Oct. 20. The service predicts that tickets will rise \$10 a day from the end of October through Thanksgiving. The same pattern will take hold for Christmas week flights beginning in mid-November. In late September, Jessica Stroup, a physical therapist in Chicago, used Google Flights to start tracking December flights to Syracuse, New York. From \$194 round trip, they began to inch up by early October, convincing her to act when they hit \$214. "It was up \$10 and then \$5 and I just knew we had to buy," Stroup said.

Hopper's lead economist, Hayley Berg, predicted that Christmas 2022 "will be the most expensive in five years" thanks to a variety of factors, including jet fuel prices, inflation, a low supply of seats as airlines continue to restrain capacity and high expected demand. Thanksgiving rates are currently in line with 2019.

#### **'The hidden best week'**

For bargains, holiday-season travelers should look abroad, particularly in late November, when domestic travel is expensive.

"I like to call Thanksgiving the hidden best week for international travel," Keyes said. "Essentially, it's one of the cheapest times to travel for the whole year."

To illustrate that point, he recently priced round-trip tickets from New York City to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, at \$567 and to Lisbon for \$429. Dublin, he added, was widely on sale from many American airports, with fares under \$600 round trip.

"Also, hotels, car rentals, everything will be at low-season rates," he added. Similarly, in a recent email campaign, Kayak flagged round-trip flights to foreign destinations as cheaper than domestic ones over Thanksgiving week. From San Francisco, it found flights to Athens at \$684 compared to Orlando at \$687. From Denver, it suggested Mexico City at \$429 compared to a trip to New York City at \$478. From Miami, it listed Lima, Peru, at \$399 as cheaper than getting to Austin, Texas, at \$425.

Still, it won't pay to wait to make a decision on traveling abroad at Thanksgiving. Virtuoso, the consortium of travel agencies, expects bookings to surge for international travel in the next seven weeks as more than half of its international bookings by Americans for Thanksgiving travel in 2019 and 2021 were made in October and November.

Not all foreign travel will be cheaper. Caribbean destinations, for example, often experience a Thanksgiving bump.

"Generally, we recommend going against the crowds and avoiding those for the major holidays," said Jonathan Alder, the CEO at Jonathan's Travels, a Los Angeles-based agency, who is encouraging clients to consider travel abroad to places like Europe and Japan. "With the yen, euro and pound very low right now, travelers are definitely in store for a far better value than they would get at a beach destination."

### **Rental home holidays**

The pandemic gave rise to the trend of renting a vacation home, rather than gathering at a family home, according to vacation rental services.

HomeToGo said holiday rental searches are up 30% compared to before the pandemic. Average nightly rates on the platform are \$395 over Thanksgiving and \$424 over Christmas and New Year's Eve, or roughly 60-70% higher than other weeks in November and December. Holiday reservations to date at RedWeek, which rents timeshares in popular resort destinations, are outpacing last year and are more than triple bookings for Christmas 2019 and four times those made for Thanksgiving that year.

Searches on the vacation home rental site Vrbo for the holiday season are up nearly 10% over last year, with strong bookings in popular coastal destinations in Hawaii and North Carolina.

At AvantStay, which rents out more than 1,000 vacation homes in the United States, Thanksgiving week bookings are up almost six times those made in 2019 and Christmas week reservations are almost quadruple compared to the same period before the pandemic.

Home-like hotels are riding the intimacy wave, too. While it normally sells out one to two months before the holidays, Deer Path Inn, which is modeled on an English mansion, in Lake Forest, Illinois, booked up six months in advance this year, with Christmas reservations tripling 2019 results, which management attributes to increased family vacations and staycations for locals over the holidays.

### **'Festive season' renewed**

In industry parlance, "festive season," or the holiday period between Christmas and New Year's when travelers book resort destination vacations, is back this year.

According to Priceline, holiday travelers are bullish on Hawaii, where flight searches are up five times year over year from Thanksgiving through New Year's. Other popular destinations include Palm Springs, California; St. Thomas, in the U.S. Virgin Islands; and Jackson, Wyoming.

Even without the huge numbers of Asian travelers visiting Hawaii as they did pre-pandemic, holiday rates in the Highgate hotel portfolio for properties on Maui and Oahu are 20% above 2019. Rates for Royal Lahaina Maui over Christmas start at \$725.

"By this past May, space was already at a premium" in the Caribbean and Hawaii, according to Hechler, the travel adviser with D. Tours Travel.

Management of the Rosewood Bermuda expects the island resort to be three-quarters full Dec. 24-31, an increase of 20% from last year and, with rates recently starting at \$625, up about \$250 a night.

As an expanding list of foreign destinations reopen, many people are forgoing traditional destinations for more adventurous trips.

"Continuing the trend post-COVID lockdown, we're sending more clients to exotic destinations," said Avery Harris, the director of marketing for Viking Travel, an agency in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, listing client trips planned to cruise the Nile in Egypt and hike in New Zealand. "People seem to be doing more traveling for the experience, rather than traveling to relax and escape." Kyte, a car rental service in the United States, is tracking longer rental terms, sometimes four and six weeks, over the holidays.

"This year the holidays will also be more about 'exploration' compared to the 'getting together' that we've seen last year," Ludwig Schoenack, a co-founder of Kyte, wrote in an email. "While people will definitely look to visit family, the sky is the limit with travel bans lifted."

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HEADLINE	10/18 Calif. to end Covid emergency in Feb 28 <sup>th</sup>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/10/18/California-state-of-emergency-COVID-19/6951666078531/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/10/18/California-state-of-emergency-COVID-19/6951666078531/</a>

GIST	<p>Oct. 18 (UPI) -- California's <a href="#">COVID-19</a> state of emergency will end in February, Gov. <a href="#">Gavin Newsom</a> said, while citing a dramatic reduction in hospitalizations and deaths.</p> <p>The state of emergency will end Feb. 28, which Newsom said Monday will give healthcare systems the tools needed to combat any potential surges of the coronavirus during the holiday months and time to properly phase out the emergency measures.</p> <p>"The state of emergency was an effective and necessary tool that we utilized to protect our state, and we wouldn't have gotten to this point without it," Newsom said in <a href="#">a statement</a>.</p> <p>"With the operational preparedness that we've built up and the measures that we'll continue to employ moving forward, California is ready to phase out this tool."</p> <p>With the emergency measures ending, Newsom said that when the state's legislature reconvenes early next year he will seek to immediately make two statutory changes that will continue to permit nurses to dispense COVID-19 therapeutics and allow laboratory workers to continue processing COVID-19 tests.</p> <p>"California's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has prepared us for whatever comes next," said Dr. Mark Ghaly, the head of the state's health and human services agency. "As we move into this next phase, the infrastructure and processes we've invested in and built up will provide us the tools to manage any ups and downs in the future."</p> <p>According to state data, more than 82.3 million COVID-19 vaccines were administered throughout California, which officials say saved some 20,000 lives while keeping 73,000 from needing to be hospitalized and another 1.5 million people from being infected in the first place.</p> <p>The state of emergency armed the governor with powers that allowed him to institute mitigating measures, such as lockdowns and mandatory maskings, some of which were met with push back from conservatives. On Monday, Newsom's administration defended their decisions, stating California's economic output shrank only 2.8% compared to the U.S. average of 3.5%. It also said that California had the lowest death rate among large states.</p> <p>State data shows that more than 10.4 million cases of COVID-19 were recorded in California amid the pandemic, resulting in 95,604 deaths.</p> <p>About 72.3% of eligible Californians have been vaccinated against the virus, compared to 68% of the nation's total eligible population.</p> <p>California's announcement comes as only a handful of states maintain their COVID-19 emergency powers. Late last week, the Biden administration <a href="#">extended</a> the nationwide COVID-19 public health emergency until Jan. 11.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Bird flu poultry deaths nears record</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-nears-record-poultry-deaths-bird-flu-virus-type-complicates-fight-2022-10-18/">https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-nears-record-poultry-deaths-bird-flu-virus-type-complicates-fight-2022-10-18/</a>
GIST	<p>CHICAGO, Oct 18 (Reuters) - A near-record number of U.S. chickens and turkeys have died in this year's outbreak of avian flu, as a different form of the virus than farmers battled before has infected more wild birds that then transmit the disease, officials said.</p> <p>More than 47 million birds have died due to infections and cullings. This has spurred export bans, lowered <a href="#">egg</a> and turkey production, and contributed to record prices of the staples ahead of the U.S. holiday season. The outbreak exacerbates economic pain for consumers grappling with soaring <a href="#">inflation</a>.</p>

In 2015, 50.5 million birds died in the deadliest U.S. outbreak, the nation's worst animal-health event to date.

Farmers are fighting a subtype of the H5N1 strain of the virus that survived over the summer, when rising temperatures typically reduce avian flu, said Rosemary Sifford, chief veterinary officer for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The same subtype, known as the goose/Guangdong lineage, is spreading in Europe, she said in an interview. [Europe](#) is already suffering its worst avian flu crisis, with nearly 50 million poultry culled.

Officials are finding the subtype in a broader range of wild birds, such as ducks, than in the past and it seems to live in the birds longer, Sifford said. An elevated threat for infections may persist until summer 2023 as they migrate, she said.

The United States is monitoring wild birds for avian flu in four migration paths known as flyways, up from two previously, and plans to do the same next year.

"This virus could be present in wild birds for the foreseeable future," Sifford said. "This one is certainly different."

The outbreak has infected flocks in 42 states since February, twice as many as in 2015, USDA records show. Infections slowed over the summer this year but did not stop as they did in 2015.

The tenacity of the virus surprised some producers, who have boosted cleaning and security in barns since the 2015 outbreak.

"Unfortunately what we've done probably hasn't been enough to protect us from this high load of virus in the wild bird population," Sifford said.

#### RECORD TURKEY PRICES

Minnesota, the nation's top turkey-producing state, suffered infections in two commercial flocks in late August after going three months without cases, USDA data show. The state then saw more cases in September.

"Seeing a spike in August was not something that was expected," said Ashley Kohls, executive director of the Minnesota Turkey Growers Association.

After infections, it takes about six months to decontaminate farms and resume turkey production, Kohls said.

Minnesota-based Hormel Foods Corp ([HRL.N](#)), owner of the Jennie-O Turkey Store brand, said it expects avian flu to reduce its turkey production at least through March 2023.

"We've worked really hard but clearly this is still an issue," Hormel CEO James Snee said on a conference call last month.

Retail prices for fresh boneless, skinless turkey breast reached a record \$6.70 per pound last month, up 112% from a year earlier and 14% above the previous record from 2015, the American Farm Bureau said.

Turkey meat production this year is set to drop 6% from 2021 to 5.2 billion pounds, according to the USDA.

U.S. farmers, who face high costs for feed and labor, were already cutting production before the outbreak due to declining profits. Inventories of turkey breasts in cold storage facilities reached a record low this year, USDA data show.

Indiana turkey farmer Greg Gunthorp said grocers, online retailers and other buyers have called searching for whole turkeys and breasts. Antibiotic-free turkey breasts are selling for \$7-\$9 per pound wholesale, compared to about \$3 before the COVID-19 pandemic, he said.

"The turkey market right now is the craziest I've ever seen it," Gunthorp said.

Infections in flocks have triggered export restrictions on U.S. poultry, further hurting producers. China, a major buyer, has blocked poultry from entire states with confirmed cases and is taking longer than it should to lift the bans, the USA Poultry and Egg Export Council said.

China this month suspended poultry imports from Arkansas, the third-biggest producer of chickens raised for meat, after the state [reported its first infection](#) of the year, USDA records show. The state's agriculture secretary, Wes Ward, said he had hoped Arkansas could avoid the disease.

"The virus has changed," Ward said. "Hopefully it's one of those where the virus will burn itself out after a year or so and maybe things will calm down again."

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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 Covid wave collision course holiday travel?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/travel/2022/10/17/covid-wave-holiday-travel/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/travel/2022/10/17/covid-wave-holiday-travel/</a>
GIST	<p>The summer of 2022 delivered on predictions it would be the season of “revenge travel,” with <a href="#">countries dropping coronavirus restrictions</a>, passengers filling up long-haul flights and <a href="#">cruise ships</a>, and demand soaring to levels not seen since 2019.</p> <p>With the winter holidays approaching, that demand shows no signs of slowing down. The Transportation Security Administration <a href="#">screened</a> nearly 2.5 million passengers on Sunday, the highest daily figure since February 2020.</p> <p>Still, the <a href="#">coronavirus</a> has remained persistent, <a href="#">scuttling long-awaited plans</a>, <a href="#">straining the travel industry’s workforce</a> and making many <a href="#">summer trips turn hellish</a>. Now, health experts are warning another winter surge could be ahead, with cases already rising in Europe and researchers keeping an eye on <a href="#">new strains of the virus</a>.</p> <p>The uptick comes as many Americans headed abroad will have less protection against the dominant omicron variant because vaccination rates for the <a href="#">new bivalent booster are lagging</a>. As of early October, only about 4 percent of eligible Americans had received the new shot.</p> <p>Here’s what to know if you plan to take a big trip this holiday season.</p> <p><b>Where is the coronavirus surging around the world?</b></p> <p>Signs point to a surge in Europe, which could foretell another winter wave in the United States. Cases rose by 104 percent in Portugal and 42 percent in Switzerland over the past week, while the virus has also surged in Germany, France, Italy and Austria, according to <a href="#">The Washington Post’s coronavirus tracker</a>.</p> <p>The World Health Organization and European Center for Disease Prevention and Control <a href="#">warned</a> Wednesday that the continent is probably entering a new covid wave, which will coincide with a resurgence in the flu. In the ECDC’s latest <a href="#">weekly report</a>, it noted “widespread increases were being observed in all indicators,” including cases, hospitalizations and deaths across the continent.</p> <p>Covid cases are also up in parts of Asia, including <a href="#">South Korea</a>, <a href="#">Taiwan</a> and <a href="#">Japan</a>, which have dropped most of their travel restrictions in recent months. In Singapore, which has seen a 44 percent increase in the average number of daily reported cases over the past week, the Ministry of Health <a href="#">said Saturday</a> that an omicron subvariant known as XBB jumped from a 22 percent share of local cases to 54 percent over the course of a week.</p>



When cases rise in Europe, it's often "just a matter of weeks or months" until a surge follows in the United States, said Sanjana Ravi, a visiting assistant scientist at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security at the Bloomberg School of Public Health.

"We saw that with the delta variant. We saw that with the omicron variant," Ravi said. "I think it's safe to take precautions considering that we're starting to see those numbers go up again in Europe now."

### **How will the travel industry be affected?**

A winter covid wave will probably further strain airports and airlines that were plagued by labor shortages over the summer.

Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport has [announced](#) that short staffing will force it to cap the number of passengers it can accommodate per day through at least March 2023. Dutch carrier KLM [said](#) it would have to reduce winter ticket sales at Schiphol by up to 22 percent because of the limits.

Last winter, U.S. airlines were forced to [cancel thousands of flights](#) around Christmas as the omicron variant sickened employees. The following week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [halved the isolation period](#) for asymptomatic coronavirus infections to five days, fearing a breakdown in essential services.

Henry Harteveltdt, a travel analyst at Atmosphere Research Group, said this year's bookings for holiday travel both within Europe and between the United States and Europe appear strong. Still, he noted, airline executives are concerned about a number of factors that could dampen travel, including a covid surge and economic uncertainty.

"It's as if right now, the travel industry is standing on a plank of wood that can support its weight ... but which may splinter at any moment, possibly with little warning," Harteveltdt said in an email.

### **Should I reconsider my travel plans?**

For young, healthy people who are fully vaccinated, including with the bivalent booster, most travel is safe, said Henry Wu, an associate professor of medicine at Emory University and director of the Emory TravelWell Center.

Elderly and immunocompromised individuals, however, might want to consider shifting their plans to avoid crowded areas and countries without high-quality medical care, even if they are vaccinated, Wu said. Ahead of winter, he recommended travelers look for locales with milder weather that allows them to eat outdoors.

"Early on in the covid pandemic, a lot of the outbreaks did occur in ski lodges," Wu said. "We had a lot of people in indoor spaces which probably seem cozy at that moment, but also probably had less than adequate ventilation."

Ravi recommended postponing all nonessential travel to Europe, especially for those at high risk. If you must travel, she said, test before departing home, wear an N95 mask for the duration of transit and consider bringing an [air filter](#).

Lin H. Chen, an associate professor at Harvard Medical School and director of the Travel Medicine Center at Mount Auburn Hospital, recommended travelers consider [travel medical insurance](#) in case they have to cancel their trip at the last minute or get sick abroad.

### **Are covid restrictions likely to return?**

Over the past year, most of the world has relaxed its covid restrictions for travelers, including vaccination, testing and mask mandates. Europe's top destinations, such as [Italy](#), [France](#), [the United Kingdom](#) and [Germany](#), are fully open for tourism.

Mark Fischer, a regional medical director at International SOS, a health and security risk management firm, said he does not expect those restrictions to return, even with a winter surge.

“However, I think there’s a key focus on the overall health-care burden of the winter respiratory season,” with governments monitoring how covid and the flu together affect hospital systems, Fischer said.

Wu said countries dropping their restrictions does not mean measures such as vaccination and wearing a high-quality mask are not “extremely useful” to individual travelers.

“I would advise even travelers who are not concerned with severe illness, covid or influenza can still make you miserable on your trip or your vacation,” he said.

Chen recommended immunocompromised travelers consider [Evusheld](#), a preventive antibody treatment, before their trip to “supercharge their protection.”

### **Do I need a flu shot, too?**

After coronavirus precautions kept the flu [largely at bay](#) the past two years, Wu said it is “quite possible” seasonal flu makes a major return this winter. He recommended all travelers get their annual flu shots before departing.

“I’ve always told travelers that probably the vaccine that’s most likely to save your life, pre-covid, is the flu shot because the flu is just so common, historically, among travelers,” Wu said.

Ravi said it’s easy to get your flu shot and bivalent booster at the same time at your local pharmacy.

“Just because we’re in the middle of a pandemic at the moment, it doesn’t mean that other respiratory viruses aren’t still a threat,” Ravi said.

### **What if I test positive while abroad?**

The most important thing travelers can do is build flexibility into their itinerary so they can avoid travel if they do test positive, Wu said.

“When you plan your trip, if potentially getting sick and having to stay somewhere an extra four or five or more days is a big problem, then probably that trip is either not the best trip to take, or it means the travelers really should take those precautions to prevent getting sick while traveling,” he said.

Chen, the former president of the International Society of Travel Medicine, recommended travelers use [ISTM’s online clinic directory](#) to find reliable medical care if they get sick abroad. You should also speak to your doctor before traveling, especially if you think you might need antiviral treatment due to a preexisting condition, she said.

### **Where can I find more information?**

The CDC provides [recommendations for international travel](#), which urge travelers to be fully up to date on vaccinations, including boosters; wear masks on public transportation; and test before departure and after arrival.

The CDC [recently ended](#) its country-specific covid-19 travel designations but still issues [travel health notices](#) for countries where travelers would be at extreme risk for contracting the coronavirus. The State Department also issues country-specific [travel advisories](#), which factor in covid-19 risk and other threats. Travelers can also check databases such as [Sherpa](#) and [Kayak](#) for the latest information on coronavirus restrictions in foreign countries.

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HEADLINE	10/18 Australia: first fires now devastating floods
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/10/18/australia-floods-climate-change-storm/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/10/18/australia-floods-climate-change-storm/</a>



SYDNEY — Gianni Vitellone watched as climate disasters struck Australia repeatedly in recent years — first [wildfires](#), then [floods](#). But he never thought he'd be beset by the country's increasingly volatile weather in his own neighborhood, just seven miles from Melbourne's city center.

After the order to evacuate came with a knock on the door at 5 a.m. on Friday, the 38-year-old travel agent went to work, as usual. From his desk, he monitored the flood reports with growing disbelief, as aerial images showed the waters from the nearby Maribyrnong River rising to 13.7 feet, significantly higher than the benchmark for a major flood on that river.

That night, he donned a pair of waders and forced the door open on the home he shares with his wife, three children and mother-in-law to find almost all of what they owned had been lost.

"I don't know how anyone can say that it's not climate change," he said as he contemplated his debris-strewn yard on Tuesday. Ruined furniture and household items lined the street, waiting for garbage collectors.

Thousands of people have been displaced by floodwaters in recent days across Australia's east, where most of its 25.5 million residents live. As many as 34,000 homes could be inundated or isolated by the floodwaters in southern Victoria state alone, according to official projections. Authorities warned residents in some areas it was ["too late to leave"](#) as floodwaters approached 40 feet.

The unseasonal deluge was highly unusual. October — the start of wildfire season Down Under — is typically accompanied by hot and dry conditions. But Australia is experiencing an exceptionally [rare](#) third straight year of [La Niña conditions](#) — an oceanic and atmospheric phenomenon that typically brings above-average rainfall to the country's east. A [periodic cooling of the western Indian Ocean](#), connected to La Niña, is also contributing to the higher rainfall.

Sydney broke rainfall records dating back more than a century [this month](#), with three months of the year to go. Parts of New South Wales state, of which Sydney is the capital, have flooded several times over the past couple of years. At least 20 people died, and thousands were forced to evacuate when [devastating floods inundated parts of New South Wales](#) and Queensland in late February and early March. Two people have been killed in the latest floods.

The country is prone to big swings in weather, but scientists say the latest rain is unusual because it has fallen across almost the entire continent — which is slightly smaller than the contiguous United States — in the past two weeks. Many dams and rivers are at full capacity.

"Our rain events are usually regional — not national," said Margaret Cook, a flood historian at the University of the Sunshine Coast. "Dense cloud bands have crossed the desert, carrying moisture evaporating from seas off northwest Australia."

Researchers [say](#) climate change is worsening the situation. Australia has warmed by around 2.6 degrees Fahrenheit (1.5 Celsius) since 1910. A warming atmosphere holds more moisture and can increase the intensity of extreme rainfall events.

The recent floods followed a period of extreme drought, which, coupled with intensifying heat waves, helped fuel [catastrophic wildfires](#) in 2019 and early 2020. The increasingly volatile climate is making it hard for residents in some disaster zones to rebuild: About 1 in 25 Australian homes are at high risk of becoming uninsurable by 2030, [according to the Climate Council](#), an independent advocacy group.

"If the current situation in the eastern states isn't a sure sign we need to reconsider where and how our houses are built, then there's a long and volatile road ahead," said [Trivess Moore](#), a sustainable housing expert at RMIT University in Melbourne. "The majority of existing and new housing in Australia is not suitable for performing in our current climate."

	<p>Paul Williamson, 63, who lives across the road from Vitellone, the travel agent, in the inner Melbourne neighborhood of Maribyrnong, said he had opted out of buying flood insurance two weeks ago because of the almost \$10,000 yearly price tag.</p> <p>The musician lost his piano, which could not be moved out of the floodwaters' path, as well as sentimental items and scripts belonging to his partner, an actress. "But it's been a good chance to get rid of a lot of crap," he quipped.</p> <p>Policymakers say more needs to be done to avoid development in disaster-prone areas, with Australia's new center-left government indicating that planning and development regulations could be ripe for reform. A hot housing market has spurred many new real estate developments in recent years, including on flood plains. Some have been <a href="#">paused</a> while governments revise their flood strategies.</p> <p>Officials warned it could be weeks before floodwaters recede in some areas, as they work their way through the country's expansive river network. Another storm system is forecast to develop over central Australia, potentially bringing more severe thunderstorms, <a href="#">heavy rain</a> and flooding to already saturated areas this week.</p> <p>"We're living in very dangerous times in the days and weeks ahead," Prime Minister Anthony Albanese told reporters during a Monday visit to a flooded town in western New South Wales.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Kurds facing mounting Iran crackdown</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/10/18/iran-kurds-protests-mahsa-amini/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/10/18/iran-kurds-protests-mahsa-amini/</a>
GIST	<p>Security forces with heavy weapons roam the streets of Sanandaj, Kurdistan's provincial capital, in armored vehicles. They fire into the homes of terrified residents, who are living under a near-total communication blackout.</p> <p>"Sanandaj is now a military zone with weapons of war being used," a 30-year-old woman in the city, some 250 miles west of Tehran, told The Washington Post by voice message. Like other locals in this story, she spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals by security forces. "Almost every house in the city has been affected," she said.</p> <p>Iran's long-oppressed Kurdish population has been at the forefront of the month-long anti-government uprising. Now it is bearing the brunt of the government's intensifying efforts to crush the unrest — a possible harbinger of what awaits protesters in other parts of the country.</p> <p>In interviews with The Post over the last week, three residents of Sanandaj described a military-style occupation of their city, which has been almost entirely cut off from internet and phone service since mid-September. The Post could not independently verify their accounts, but they were consistent with the findings of rights groups, and with past crackdowns in Kurdish areas.</p> <p>"The consolidation of authoritarianism" in Iran "has often been consummated through the repression of the Kurdish movement," said Djene Rhys Bajalan, a professor at Missouri State University who specializes in Kurdish history. "The road to tyranny goes through Kurdistan."</p> <p>The demonstrations now sweeping the country first gained speed in Kurdistan province. It's the hometown of Mahsa Amini — or Jina Amini in her native Kurdish language — whose death in police custody last month fanned long-simmering fury over the iron rule of Iran's clerical leaders.</p> <p>But for Iranian Kurds, who make up about 10 percent of the population, the protests are also part of a long tradition of resistance against the Islamic Republic. One of the demonstrators' key slogans — "Woman, life, freedom" — <a href="#">has its roots</a> in the regional Kurdish struggle.</p>

“Men and women of all generations have come together here to fight for their rights that have been trampled for 50 years,” the 30-year-old woman told The Post. “We will be on the streets until the day we find some peace from this constant injustice and oppression.”

The Kurds are one of the world’s largest stateless ethnic groups, with tens of millions of people in communities spanning Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. In Iran, they are typically Sunni Muslim, subject to heightened discrimination by Iran’s theocratic Shiite government.

Kurds have long struggled for an autonomous region of their own in northwestern Iran — a movement Iranian authorities have sought to crush.

Tehran responded swiftly and violently to the outbreak of protests here in September and was quick to blame the unrest on foreign instigators and dissidents.

For the first five days of protests, all of those killed — seven people, including a sixteen-year-old boy — came from Kurdish communities. One month in, [rights groups estimate](#) around thirty Kurds, [including five children](#), have been killed among some 200 deaths nationwide.

Exact figures are nearly impossible to confirm “either because of communication outages or because [people] are too afraid to speak,” said Rebin Rahmani, a member of the board of directors of the France-based Human Rights Network of Kurdistan.

Iranian authorities have been stepping up assaults on Kurdish hot spots like Sanandaj for more than a week, said Baha Bahreini, an Iran researcher with Amnesty International.

“They have made the city into a military base,” a 37-year-old businessman told The Post. “Sanandaj is fully militarized.”

Residents told The Post they are afraid to leave their homes. Yet despite the danger, they said, protesters are still taking to the streets each day, usually in the evenings.

The businessman said various security forces, including the feared Basij unit of the elite Revolutionary Guard, attack people at random.

“They have this look that is filled with hatred and grudge toward us,” he said. “The brutality that you are seeing on videos is real.”

In [one video](#) circulating online, a man shows how a bullet went through the window of his home in Sanandaj, through a wall and into another room.

“There have been a lot of disturbing reports about constant firing of live ammunition throughout the whole night and reports of tear gas or different ammunitions being thrown at the windows of houses to prevent people from going to the windows and looking at the streets,” Bahreini said.

The violence would not end “without urgent action at the international level,” Bahreini continued.

“We know the way the system is,” she said. “It’s been constant waves of protests over the years and killing with impunity.”

Kurds make up half of political prisoners held in Iran and a disproportionately high number of those executed, according to [a 2019 U.N. report](#), part of a history of brutality toward the country’s Kurdish communities.

The Pahlavi monarchy, which ruled Iran from 1925 to 1979, tried to centralize control by assimilating Kurds, sometimes by force, and reducing the power of tribal leaders, Bajalan said.

Iranian Kurds joined protests to overthrow Reza Shah Pahlavi — and continued to fight against Shiite revolutionaries who won out in 1979.

When the Iran-Iraq war broke out in 1980, Iran's new clerical leaders upped their efforts to crush Kurdish resistance.

"The Iranian state heavily militarized the region," Bajalan said, adding that the state "condemns all forms of political activism as separatism."

Armed Kurdish groups seeking autonomy in Iran have periodically fought with government security forces. Many have sought refuge across the border in Kurdistan, Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region.

Iran has retaliated by carrying out strikes across the border in Iraq, including two last month, accusing Kurdish groups there of having a hand in the protests. Kurdish authorities said strikes on Sept. 28 killed 10 people, including at one least one child.

Iran's Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi, while visiting Sanandaj on Oct. 11, blamed the city's unrest on "terrorist and separatist groups," with an "ugly and bad history" of cooperating with Saddam Hussein, western countries and Israel, the IRGC-affiliated [Fars News reported](#).

The 37-year-old businessman in Sanandaj denied accusations that protesters are armed. "The people are fighting with no weapons," he said, and are being met by security forces with "military grade weapons."

That was echoed by a 65-year-old woman who described a scene she witnessed while driving around Sanandaj on Oct. 8, when she heard cars honking and saw riot police dressed in black with masks over their faces. Police ran after bystanders, she said, and threw tear gas at a group of women not wearing headscarves. Closer to her home, she heard continuous rounds of gunfire, then saw a group of young people fleeing the scene.

Just days earlier, she said wistfully, she had seen women and girls without their hijabs doing a Kurdish dance in a local park at night, their hair glowing in the moonlight.

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HEADLINE	10/17 Report: why CHOP ended in bloodshed
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.capitolhillseattle.com/2022/10/why-chop-ended-in-bloodshed-report-blames-police-lies-mayoral-dysfunction-and-intentional-manipulation-of-protestor-fear/">https://www.capitolhillseattle.com/2022/10/why-chop-ended-in-bloodshed-report-blames-police-lies-mayoral-dysfunction-and-intentional-manipulation-of-protestor-fear/</a>
GIST	<p>Among the 34 recommendations produced in the latest in a series of planned reports from the <b>Office of Inspector General for Public Safety</b> examining <b>City Hall</b> and the <b>Seattle Police Department's</b> flawed response to the 2020's Black Lives Matter and anti-police protests and the formation of <b>CHOP</b> on Capitol Hill, there is one missing recommendation that the day by day examination of the actions from leaders like then-<b>Mayor Jenny Durkan</b> and <b>Chief Carmen Best</b> illustrates very clearly.</p> <p>Do not lie.</p> <p>The report, issued last week, is the third in a planned five "wave" series from a 23-member community panel including Capitol Hill community and business members as well as SPD personnel convened to examine the period before, during, and after the Capitol Hill Occupied Protest and produce recommendations for the city and SPD.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Wave 1</b> (May 29 – June 1), comprises the period from the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis to the first set of demonstrations in Seattle, mainly in Downtown Seattle. <a href="#">CHS report</a></li><li>▪ <b>Wave 2</b> (June 2 – June 7) includes events that occurred before the leaving of the East Precinct by SPD. During this period, the main demonstrations and confrontations shifted from Downtown to the East Precinct. <a href="#">CHS report</a></li><li>▪ <b>Wave 3</b> (June 8 – July 2) includes events that occurred during the existence of the Capitol Hill Organized Protest (CHOP) and Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone (CHAZ).</li></ul>

- ***Wave 4** (July 3 – Oct 6) includes events after the East Precinct was reestablished.*
- ***Wave 5** (Oct 6 to the end of 2020) includes events after the creation by SPD Interim Chief of Police Adrian Diaz of the Community Response Group, tasked specifically with responding to demonstrations, among other things.*

The new “Wave 3” report documents a cloud of “deception,” “intentional manipulation of protestor fear,” and irresponsible acts from the mayor down to SPD that eroded trust and made it nearly impossible for the city to effectively communicate with protesters like the June 10th, 2020 press conference in which officials repeated unsubstantiated lies about the protest area. The panel’s report says acts like that set the stage for critical communication errors by the city and mistrust by the community and protesters that contributed to the violent and dangerous conditions that developed around the protest area, leading to deadly shootings, and the July police sweep that ended the protest camp, burying important issues around race and equity that remain unaddressed. “Lying to the community in this way was not only contrary to policy, but it was also a poorly considered tactic contributing to the tensions,” the report says.

Mayor Durkan and her office were also to blame for the deceit and mixed messages delivered during communications and actions around the protest, the new report says.

“This lack of communication falls both on the Mayor’s Office and on SPD leadership,” the report’s analysis of the abandonment of the East Precinct reads. “The Panel was left to draw one of two conclusions from the Mayor and the Chief distancing themselves from the decision process. Either (a) the leaders of the City or SPD were removed from the decision, in which case they did not adequately participate in potentially impactful decision- making, or (b) the leaders of the City and/or SPD were being disingenuous with both the community and SPD officers.”

The panel’s [Wave 1 report issued in July 2021](#) examined the dates of May 29th to June 1st, 2020 when the seeds were planted for weeks of protests including the CHOP occupied protest and came away with findings critical of SPD responses and tactics that contributed to the unrest. The [Wave 2 report issued this March](#) looked at what came next as citywide demonstrations were focused on Capitol Hill and the demonstrations quickly shifted, leading to the establishment of CHOP. Both previous reports produced a roster of tactical and procedural recommendations for the city and SPD and its handling of protests crowds — and opened larger questions around trust.

The new Wave 3 report examines the lifespan of CHOP over 23 days as citywide protests shifted from marches and demonstrations involving thousands to a focused camp area around Cal Anderson Park and 12th and Pine and further documents the lies and miscommunications that marked the response.

It begins June 8th, the day [moving trucks arrive](#) at the **East Precinct** in moments that continue to be debated in the history of CHOP and the ongoing political battles of the city.

The surprise move came without official announcement as protests began to center on Capitol Hill — CHS first reported on the strange appearance of moving trucks arriving at 12th and Pine. The official explanation from City Hall and SPD cited worries from **FBI** warnings of possible arson attacks on the auto row-era building the precinct calls home. It came as a plan from the mayor’s office to remove barriers in the street blocking protesters at E Pine were put into motion. At the time, Chief Best said the evacuation was made as a tactical action that stemmed from Durkan’s efforts to reach out to the demonstrators and led to her decision to remove the protest barriers and allow protesters to gather outside 12th and Pine. “We took down the barricades because we really wanted to establish trust,” Best told media later that June. To this day, Best attributes the decision to on the ground commanders at 12th and Pine [despite evidence](#) that the decision was part of the department Incident Action Plan approved by SPD officials.

The Wave 3 report includes those actions in addition to SPD officials either mistakenly or intentionally making statements about unsubstantiated and not fully investigated allegations of armed checkpoints and shakedowns of area businesses in press conferences and statements to the media as evidence of bad decisions and a lack of leadership that hindered the city’s response — and set it on a permanently flawed course contributing to the growth of dangerous conditions in the CHOP zone.



While some of the lies took the shape of miscommunications and sloppy police work, other examples in the report were clear deception. The [“improper ruse”](#) in which Seattle Police officers faked reports about armed Proud Boys headed to CHOP illustrated a direct attempt to mislead the public, the report concludes, and continues to poison public perception of the city’s officers.

“Many panelists felt the use of the Proud Boys for the ruse was an intentional manipulation of protestor fear of a violent white supremacist group, used to frighten and undermine the establishment of a Black Lives Matter protest at the height of anti-police tensions in Seattle,” the report reads. “Many Panelists viewed this incident as an example of the way structural and internalized racism can coalesce in police decision-making and cause harm to the community.”

SPD also failed to properly record evidence from the ruse, adding to distrust around the incident. No SPD personnel were disciplined over the act but the department has been directed to [revise its policies](#) around so-called “disinformation tactics.”

The Wave 3 report’s examination of June 8th through July 1st, 2020’s sweep and clearance of the CHOP area concludes that dysfunctional leadership, poor communication between Mayor Durkan and Chief Best, as well as the efforts by SPD leadership to mislead the public and exaggerate the dangers posed by CHOP and the trumped-up evacuation of the East Precinct damaged the city’s efforts to effectively respond to the Black Lives Matter protests and put the city’s response on a collision course with tragic outcomes.

The lies like the ruse and the protester checkpoints and shakedowns were part of the damaging communication made by the city and city personnel that included on-the-ground mistakes and delays during the response to the June 20th, 2020 shooting death of 19-year-old **Lorenzo Anderson** on the edge of CHOP.

Miscommunication and mistakes delayed Seattle Police and Seattle Fire’s response to the scene on the edge of the protest area the night of the deadly shooting in an area SPD was refusing to respond to for most 911 calls after its abandonment of the nearby East Precinct building. The teen died at CHOP’s makeshift medical aid station on a table cleared outside Pike/Pine fast food joint **Rancho Bravo**.

Nine days later, 16-year-old **Antonio Mays, Jr.** died in a bullet-riddled jeep and a 14-year-old boy riding with him suffered critical injuries in the shootout at the camp. The presence of armed campers and security volunteers and the shooting deaths of the teenagers eventually led to [the July 1st order](#) for police to raid and sweep the protest zone and clear the camp.

The demonstrations, meanwhile, would continue but causes around Black Lives Matter and real response to needed social change would fade into anti-police protests and costly “direct action” including fires and vandalism targeting area businesses.

Capitol Hill business owners and residents were left to deal with the aftermath. Some have pursued a lawsuit to recoup financial losses — but even in that process, there is [more evidence of deliberate and unintentional acts](#) that have obscured the truth of the events of 2020.

And city and SPD officials have thus far mostly avoided any direct personal consequences though the OIG reports issued thus far document a major erosion in trust in the department and the difficulties police will face now and in the future because of that damage. Chief Best resigned shortly thereafter and Mayor Durkan decided to not seek reelection.

Still, little has changed from 2020. The city’s [2023 budget proposal](#) from **Mayor Bruce Harrell’s** office will likely lead to a rollback of the only major material changes made to SPD in the wake of the BLM movement. Harrell’s proposal would restore the department’s budget back to \$375 million — up \$20 million from the current budget — by abandoning the major compromise reform from the “Defund SPD” debate — transferring parking enforcement back to police control.

	The final reports and additional recommendations from the inspector general's office will be released in coming months.
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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 Iran dilemma: children join protests</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/17/middleeast/iran-school-children-protests-mime-intl/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/17/middleeast/iran-school-children-protests-mime-intl/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>Abu DhabiCNN — Earlier this year, Iran flaunted a new patriotic song targeting school children around the country. Titled “Salute, Commander,” the song was a tribute to Iran’s elite <a href="#">Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps</a> (IRGC) and Imam Mahdi, a descendant of Prophet Mohammed who Shiite Muslims believe went into hiding in the 10th century and will reappear one day to end injustice.</p> <p>“Salute, commander,” goes the song. “I’m a child, but the life of my family and I, all belongs to you.” In a <a href="#">music video</a> published on Iranian media, thousands of young boys and veiled girls are seen singing in unison to a live performance of the song. Some are seen crying, and others are wearing military uniforms while holding posters of former Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani, <a href="#">who was killed by a United States airstrike</a> in 2020.</p> <p>Critics decried the song as an attempt to indoctrinate children and instill in them loyalty for the Islamic Republic.</p> <p>But Iran analysts say that current anti-regime protests sweeping through the country have shown that the regime has failed to <a href="#">subdue the younger generation</a> after more than 40 years in power.</p> <p>Protests erupted in Iran on September 17, triggered by the death of <a href="#">22-year-old Mahsa Amini</a>, who died in a hospital three days after being arrested by “morality police” and taken to a “re-education center.”</p> <p>More than half of Iranians were born after the 1979 <a href="#">Islamic revolution</a> and have known no other regime, but many are now speaking out.</p> <p>School children are protesting their leaders on an unprecedented scale that may prove difficult to contain, say experts. In videos on social media and seen by CNN, more protests now involve school children.</p> <p>“There is another layer [to the demonstrations], which is the protests we have been seeing in schools,” said Tara Sepehri Far, a senior researcher in the Middle East and North Africa division at Human Rights Watch, adding that it is “unprecedented” for Iran.</p> <p>The government has said it is sending underaged protesters to mental health centers.</p> <p>In an interview with a reformist Iranian newspaper, Iran’s Education Minister Yousef Nouri last week <a href="#">acknowledged that school students</a> had indeed been protesting, and the government has been responding by detaining and sending them to mental health facilities. The establishments are meant to “reform” the protesting students and rid them of their “anti-social” behaviors, he said.</p> <p>The mental health facilities act like detention centers, said Hossein Raeesi, an Iranian human rights lawyer and adjunct professor at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, adding that within the establishments, psychologists and social workers are following a strict government agenda and aren’t allowed to work independently with the children.</p> <p>“They don’t provide psychological and psychosocial support for the kids,” Raeesi told CNN, but rather “brainwash” them and often intimidate or threaten them. “They come out worse than when they entered.”</p> <p>While the official did not say how many students have been detained so far, experts say that a large number of children are at risk as the protests have heavy youth participation.</p>

Sepehri Far of Human Rights Watch said authorities are finding it difficult to police underage demonstrators. While it is easy to criminalize adult protesters, violent crackdowns against children risk full-blown anger throughout the country, she added.

Rear Adm. Ali Fadavi, the deputy commander of the IRGC, placed the average age of those arrested in “recent riots” at 15 years old, reported the state news agency IRNA on October 5. The commander attributed the phenomenon to “neglect of education.”

Rights groups say the crackdown on children [has been brutal](#), with the government responding to child protesters with arrests and even violence.

Between September 20 and September 30, rights watchdog Amnesty International documented the killing of at least 23 children, it said last week, sounding the alarm about an already violent crackdown that is now targeting children.

According to Amnesty, “most of the boys were killed by security forces unlawfully firing live ammunition at them,” and “three girls and a boy died after fatal beatings by security forces.”

“Two boys died after being shot with metal pellets at close range,” it added.

The watchdog said it has so far recorded the deaths of 144 men, women and children killed by Iran’s security forces between September 19 and October 3. Overall, 16% of deaths are children, said Amnesty, adding that the real number of total deaths is estimated to be higher.

CNN cannot independently verify the death toll.

On Sunday, video obtained by CNN from the pro-reform activist outlet IranWire showed high school students in Tehran’s Narmak area protesting and chanting “Death to the dictator.” On Friday and Saturday, high school girls were seen taking off their headscarves and protesting in the cities of Ardabil and Sanandaj, video obtained by CNN showed.

Iran also witnessed protests in October by high school students in the northern city of Rasht, as well as in Ghaleh Hassan Khan, a town east of Tehran, according to video obtained by CNN.

The United Nation’s children agency UNICEF has also called for the protection of children and adolescents amid Iran’s protests.

“The Iranian authorities’ unrelenting brutal crackdown on what many in Iran consider an ongoing popular uprising against the Islamic Republic system has involved an all-out attack on child protesters,” Nassim Papayianni, Amnesty International’s senior campaigner on Iran, told CNN.

After years of enforced ideological education, authorities are now faced with a generation that is particularly defiant, said Sepehri Far. “It’s a generation standing up to them.”

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HEADLINE	10/17 Measles, polio reemerge amid vax uproar
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/17/measles-polio-reemerge-us-covid-19-vaccine-uproar/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/17/measles-polio-reemerge-us-covid-19-vaccine-uproar/</a>
GIST	<p>A Texas bill that would scrap all school vaccine requirements — not just for COVID-19 — died in committee last year, but public health advocates and anti-mandate groups are expecting round two when lawmakers convene in Austin next year.</p> <p>A form of polio was detected in unvaccinated people and wastewater in New York, and Minnesota recorded its first major outbreak of measles in five years. Meanwhile, public health experts are sounding the alarm about sliding childhood vaccination rates.</p>



Parents have gone online to scrutinize the use of novel technology to make the coronavirus vaccines in record time, and some have voiced doubts and objections.

Scientists and public health officials are worried that the pandemic has turbocharged vaccine hesitancy, which festered long before COVID-19 arrived, and amplified fringe views about how a range of vaccines are made and whether they should be required in certain instances.

“COVID vaccines are only the beginning,” said Peter Hotez, an infectious diseases expert at the Baylor College of Medicine.

He said a fledgling movement that falsely linked vaccines to autism about a decade ago has expanded and solidified into a “health freedom” movement.

An emerging catalyst for vaccine hesitancy is the rise of messenger RNA, which has been hailed as a breakthrough to combat COVID-19 and other diseases. Skeptics of the COVID-19 shots say mRNA technology — a snippet of genetic code that teaches the body to fight pathogens — is too new and hasn’t been properly vetted.

“The big thing is the mRNA technology itself, which was of course new for COVID. Since Pfizer and others are now developing new versions of vaccines for other diseases using this same technology, it has given a boost to attack all vaccines and in particular the looming prospect of all mRNA future vaccines. Activity in these online communities that we monitor has increased around this broader topic,” said Neil Johnson, a professor at George Washington University who tracks the “community interconnectivity” between anti-vaccine groups and mainstream communities online.

Public health advocates say a majority of Americans view vaccines as medical marvels that have eradicated or blunted harmful diseases.

Yet the COVID-19 fervor sparked a series of bills across the country to take a second look at school requirements.

Dorit Reiss, a professor at the University of California, Hastings College of the Law, scrubbed databases and found 47 bills filed from January 2021 to June 2022 that would limit school vaccine mandates, and 13 of them extended beyond COVID-19.

Only three of the bills she found have passed. One in New Hampshire says religious exemptions to school vaccine requirements no longer have to be notarized. Iowa legislation clarifies that no attendee to day care or school must be vaccinated for COVID-19, and an Arizona bill declares that vaccination for COVID-19 and human papillomavirus are not required for school attendance.

A failed Wisconsin bill would have barred schools from denying admission to students based on vaccination status, sparking confusion because the language did not reverse vaccine requirements.

Many legislative efforts to roll back school vaccination mandates fail, but advocates worry that some will succeed.

“It is certainly true there is a lot of pontificating, a lot of noise signifying nothing. They do that to placate their base. They have no intention of passing those bills,” said Terri Burke, executive director of The Immunization Partnership, a Houston-based group that promotes awareness about vaccine-preventable diseases. “However, I’ve seen that a lot of times, and suddenly [the efforts] take flight.”

Republicans in Texas last year filed a state bill to scrap vaccine requirements for schools and other public entities. The bill never made it out of committee, though lawmakers may try again in the next session.

“Our experience in Texas is it’s ‘Third time’s the charm.’ It will come back,” Ms. Burke said. “We are preparing for exactly that eventually.”

Texans for Vaccine Choice, which is gearing up for the legislative session that begins in January, is asking candidates to promise to “vigorously work to prohibit all vaccine mandates in Texas.”

“TFVC is working hard now to prepare for the session to ensure that all attempts to override personal vaccine decisions are stopped and that current exemption protections are preserved and advanced,” Rebecca Hardy, president of the Texans for Vaccine Choice board, told The Washington Times.

The group, which opposes vaccine mandates of any kind, said the debate around COVID-19 has expanded its influence.

“The push for universal COVID vaccination is backfiring. Our organization has seen growth in the past year as citizens wake up to the perverse incentives of forced vaccinations,” Ms. Hardy said.

Public health officials are vexed that COVID-19 vaccine fervor is bleeding into other vaccines because there seemed to be broad agreement about the need to box out measles, mumps and other common diseases from schools. Every state has mandated vaccines for school attendance, and many of these rules have been around for decades.

“There was no question that there were vaccine deniers before COVID,” Ms. Burke said. “But they were sort of there. They weren’t a huge, loud crowd. And I still don’t think they’re a majority, but they’ve gotten an awful lot louder and their numbers have grown. That is the alarm for us.”

Researchers have noticed a downturn in routine vaccinations, possibly a result of pandemic shocks that may signal a long-term trend.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported a drop in routine state-mandated vaccines for diseases such as measles and whooping cough during the 2020-2021 school year. That means 35,000 more schoolchildren without documentation of vaccination.

Michigan researchers said the share of toddlers receiving a vaccine series against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, meningitis, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, chickenpox, and pneumonia dropped from 74% in the fourth quarter of 2019 to 67.5% in the first quarter of 2022.

“We’ve actually seen numbers that are much lower than we’ve seen in a very long time, years and years, even pre- and post-COVID,” Dr. Joseph Fakhoury, a pediatrician and chairman of the Michigan Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, told the Second Wave Michigan publication.

Since June, Minnesota has recorded 17 cases of measles, all of them in children ages 2 to 13 who were unvaccinated. A majority of cases are tied to travel where measles is known to circulate, but a few are thought to be the result of community spread.

“Anyone who works in infectious disease knows that is a huge deal,” said Patsy Stinchfield, a retired nurse practitioner in Minnesota and president of the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases. “It’s the first time in five years we’ve seen measles cases in double digits, so that’s a sign things are going in the wrong direction.”

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HEADLINE	10/17 Taiwan citizens rethink threat from China
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/17/taiwanese-citizens-grapple-real-possibility-china/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/17/taiwanese-citizens-grapple-real-possibility-china/</a>
GIST	<p>TAICHUNG, Taiwan — Elsa Lin has been doing serious soul-searching about what might become of her life and how she would respond if a once-unthinkable war with China breaks out.</p> <p>“My parents think it will be better for me to leave the country if the war ever takes place,” Ms. Lin said in a recent interview. “They think if things continue to escalate, I should leave.”</p>

The 28-year-old has lived nearly her whole life in Taiwan, and she said the island democracy flourishing around her since her childhood is too valuable to abandon.

“I am proud of being Taiwanese, and if China attacks Taiwan just like Russia did Ukraine, I fear we would lose our freedom,” Ms. Lin told The Washington Times. “If we are attacked, I will fight. I will be volunteering to fight.”

She is grappling with a decision confronting Taiwan’s nearly 24 million people as Beijing increases its threat to absorb the island democracy by any means necessary, including a military invasion, to force it under the control of the Communist Party-ruled government of mainland China.

The national soul-searching has intensified since August when China dramatically expanded the scope of its military drills and missile tests near Taiwan in response to a visit by a U.S. delegation headed by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Many Taiwanese see the expansion of aggression as a sign that Beijing is practicing to invade.

Fears that China’s autocratic government will turn to military force seem more rational after eight months of violent imagery from Russia’s military invasion of Ukraine.

“After Ukraine, people’s mindset has changed,” said Betty Chen, a 40-year-old Taiwanese woman who works as an English-language translator for high-profile clients in Taipei.

“Seeing this example in Ukraine, we know that war can really happen,” said Ms. Chen. “Nobody wants war, but we cannot ignore the possibility, especially after Ukraine. I think we’ve become more and more aware of that.”

China’s success in ratcheting up pressure against a vibrant pro-democracy independence movement in Hong Kong in recent years has added to concerns that Beijing feels increasingly emboldened to wipe out the free political society in Taiwan.

The Chinese Communist Party has made a goal of absorbing Taiwan since the early 1950s, when American support helped the fleeing Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party) of Chiang Kai-shek find sanctuary for a government in exile on the island after its defeat by Mao Zedong’s forces on the mainland. U.S. military power deterred China’s new leaders from attacking Taiwan.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has pushed the goal back into the global spotlight. In 2019, he warned that Beijing could use force to dissolve Taiwan’s democracy. The heightened military drills and China’s refusal to condemn Russia’s invasion of Ukraine have increased concern that Mr. Xi may be preparing for war.

### **Getting ready**

Most Taiwanese say they want peace with China, and some say the island should avoid war at any cost. Regardless, the independence-leaning government of President Tsai Ing-wen, along with influential leaders of Taiwan’s economy with strong ties to both mainland China and the United States, are scrambling to prepare the island’s citizenry for a potential invasion.

“Putting it very simply, [Chinese officials] talk about it and they practice for it, and therefore the threat for Taiwan is real,” said Taiwanese Foreign Minister Joseph Wu.

“We sense it and we understand the urgency, and therefore we also try to prepare for the worst possible day to come,” Mr. Wu recently told foreign journalists visiting Taiwan through a program sponsored by the Taiwanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

“What we need to do is to make ourselves fully prepared so that whenever China thinks the conditions are right for them to attack against Taiwan, we are prepared and we are able to defend ourselves,” he said. “If you look at the Ukrainian people, their will to defend their freedom, they are truly inspirational to the Taiwanese people.”

Among the most inspired is Taiwanese billionaire Robert Tsao, founder of the microchip manufacturing giant United Microelectronics Corp., who has publicly pledged \$100 million to bolster the island democracy’s defense.

Mr. Tsao has said in interviews that he seeks to finance advanced drone development for Taiwan’s military.

Another \$31 million is being channeled into an effort to expand and improve the civilian defense force. Local-level training organizations have begun offering public courses on tying tourniquets, countering Chinese disinformation operations and other warfare skills.

Civilian defense training is at an early stage, and it’s unclear whether public interest is high enough to produce tens or hundreds of thousands of civilian soldiers — let alone integrate the force effectively with Taiwan’s national military.

### **Military questions**

The status of and public faith in the Taiwanese military are sensitive subjects.

Since China increased military aggression in August, 59% of Taiwanese said they have confidence in the national army’s ability to defend the island in the event of a Chinese attack, according to a poll by the government-connected Institute for National Defense and Security Research.

After Mrs. Pelosi’s visit, roughly 50% of those polled said they believed the United States would send troops to help Taiwan in the event of a Chinese invasion.

The poll also found that about 41% believe the most important way for Taiwan to protect itself is to strengthen the island’s national defense capabilities.

The Tsai government has responded by pushing for a 14% increase in defense spending for the coming year, with line items for a “special” defense ministry fund and new fighter jets.

Although the increase would bring Taiwan’s annual military budget to more than \$19 billion, it’s a drop in the bucket compared with the nearly \$230 billion that mainland China earmarked for its military in 2022.

Some Taiwan-based observers are skeptical of the island’s defense system.

“The Taiwanese military is woefully unprepared for an invasion by China,” said Wendell Minnick, a longtime Taiwan-based American journalist covering security issues in Asia.

Critics in Washington and Taipei point to the uncertain quality of Taiwanese soldiers compared with the battle-hardened and NATO-trained troops Ukraine has deployed to counter Russian aggression.

Until August, the fear of an imminent Chinese invasion of Taiwan was receding and the mandatory term of military training and service for draftees fell from as long as two years to just four months.

At the same time, many of the big-ticket items on the Taiwanese Defense Ministry’s shopping list, such as next-generation F-16 fighter jets from the United States, may not be deployable for years.

“It’s a popular idea for the news media that Taiwan could emulate Ukraine in the event of a Chinese invasion,” said Mr. Minnick, “but it’s not accurate.”

## Sea change

Many young adults in Taiwan have brought a psychological sea change in attitudes.

“The younger generation in Taiwan has more ideas about the political issues, and there are more and more people who believe that we have to stand up against China [and] prepare for war,” said Cynthia Yang, a 26-year-old professional working in the Taiwanese semiconductor manufacturing industry.

“There are a lot of activities preparing civil defense. There are civil defense organizations already,” said Ms. Yang, who spends time off work as the youth representative of the Taiwan United Nations Alliance, a nongovernmental organization whose self-described mission is to counter Chinese “bullying and coercion,” which have kept the island democracy from membership in the United Nations.

The alliance operates out of a Christian church in Taipei that hosts civilian defense training sessions.

Ms. Yang said many Taiwanese don’t want to openly declare the island as an independent, sovereign nation because they fear it will trigger a severe backlash from China.

“They are afraid of invasion from China,” she said. “They are afraid it would trigger the war directly because that’s what the Chinese government has been saying ... that [Beijing] will use all means to prevent Taiwan from declaring independence.”

Ms. Yang, Ms. Lin and others say the rising Taiwanese generation represents a new kind of thinking.

“Among my friends who have a bit more education, we have a little more time to pay attention to the international situation and politics,” said Ms. Lin. Apart from a year of university study in Europe, she has lived her whole life in Taiwan. She was coming of age as political liberties flourished after the first democratic presidential elections in 1996.

“Some of Taiwan’s citizens think politics are not important — that it’s better to just live your stable life, just work and earn money,” Ms. Lin said. “But from what I know, my friends, we want a little bit more than that. We want our freedom. We know that it is important and it is special.”

“We are in Taiwan, not China. We have freedom of speech,” she said. “If China becomes more aggressive, we will fight back. We will absolutely make some noise.”

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HEADLINE	10/18 Day 237 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/18/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-237-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/18/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-237-of-the-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Moscow stepped up attacks across Ukraine on Monday, <a href="#">killing four people and cutting off power</a></b> in a series of kamikaze drone strikes in the capital. Ukraine’s prime minister, Denys Shmygal, said Russia launched five strikes in Kyiv, as well as attacks against energy facilities in Sumy and the central Dnipropetrovsk regions, knocking out electricity to hundreds of towns and villages.</li><li>• <b>Elsewhere, <a href="#">at least three people were killed when a Russian warplane crashed near the border with Ukraine</a></b>. The plane struck a residential area of Yeysk, a town in southwestern Russia, news agencies reported, citing the defence ministry. Both pilots managed to eject before the crash, but many locals were taken to hospital with injuries, local authorities said. Health minister Mikhail Murashko said three people had died and 19 were injured, the state-run TASS news agency reported. The ministry of emergency situations had earlier given a toll of six dead. The reason for the discrepancy was not immediately clear.</li><li>• <b>Ukraine announced that more than 100 prisoners have been swapped with Russia</b> in what it said was the first all-female exchange with Moscow after nearly eight months of war. “The more</li></ul>

	<p>Russian prisoners we have, the sooner we will be able to free our heroes. Every Ukrainian soldier, every frontline commander should remember this,” Zelensky said.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>In the south, Ukrainian troops have been pushing closer and closer to the large city of Kherson, just north of Crimea.</b> Kherson is one of four regions in Ukraine that Moscow recently claimed to have annexed.</li> <li>• <b>Ukraine’s foreign minister called on the European Union to sanction Iran</b> for providing Russia with kamikaze drones that killed at least four civilians in Kyiv on Monday.</li> <li>• <b>Iran said again on Monday that it had not provided Russia with drones to use in Ukraine.</b> “The published news about Iran providing Russia with drones has political ambitions and it is circulated by western sources. We have not provided weaponry to any side of the countries at war,” Iran’s foreign ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani said. The EU’s foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said the bloc would look for “concrete evidence” about the participation of Iran in Russia’s war on Ukraine.</li> <li>• <b>The European Union has agreed to create a mission to train 15,000 Ukrainian soldiers.</b> It will also provide a further €500m to help buy weapons. An EU foreign ministers meeting on Monday approved the two-year training mission, which will involve different EU forces providing basic and specialist instruction to Ukrainian soldiers, in Poland and Germany. Officials hope the mission, which is expected to cost €107m, will be up and running by mid November.</li> <li>• <b>Israeli officials refused to comment on comments from Dmitry Medvedev, Russia’s former president, that Tel Aviv is preparing to supply military aid to Ukraine.</b> In a Telegram message on Monday, Medvedev, currently deputy chair of Russia’s security council, warned Israel against arming Kyiv, calling it a “a reckless move” that would “destroy relations between our countries”. Israel has tried to maintain a neutral stance, as it relies on Russia to facilitate its operations against Iranian-linked actors in <a href="#">Syria</a>.</li> <li>• <b>Marina Ovsyannikova</b>, the former Russian state TV journalist who staged an on-air protest against the war in March, has <a href="#">fled the country</a>, according to her lawyer.</li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 UK: Iran breaches nuclear deal</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/17/iran-breaching-nuclear-deal-by-providing-russia-with-armed-drones-says-uk">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/17/iran-breaching-nuclear-deal-by-providing-russia-with-armed-drones-says-uk</a>
GIST	<p>Britain has joined France in viewing the Iranian supply of armed drones to Russia for devastating use in <a href="#">Ukraine</a> as a breach of Iran’s obligations under the 2015 nuclear deal.</p> <p>The joint view comes as EU foreign affairs ministers slapped human rights sanctions on the Iranian morality police over their handling of street protests and treatment of women.</p> <p>The drone strikes continued in Ukraine on Monday, killing three more people, <a href="#">according to the mayor of Kyiv</a>.</p> <p>Despite the French-British belief that Iran is breaching the UN security council resolution that endorsed the nuclear deal by supplying the drones, there is no immediate plan to refer the issue to the UN, but diplomatic sources said the issue was live.</p> <p>A spokesperson for the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office said Iran’s supply of drones to <a href="#">Russia</a> constituted a breach of UN security council resolution 2231, which was unanimously adopted six days after the nuclear deal was signed in Vienna, and called on UN member states to refrain “from actions that undermine implementation of commitments”.</p> <p>“The UK has condemned Iran’s decision to supply drones and training to Russia. Iran supplying drones is inconsistent with UN security council resolution 2231 and is further evidence of the role Iran plays in undermining global security,” the spokesperson said.</p> <p>“The UK will continue to work with our partners to hold Iran to account for its destabilising behaviour around the world.”</p>

The French foreign ministry spokesperson last week revealed Paris had noted “a great deal of information that reports the use of Iranian drones by the Russian armed forces in Ukraine, in bombardments that were aimed at civilian targets”.

Although a ban on Iranian arms exports expired in 2020, the nuclear deal signed in 2015, known as the joint comprehensive plan of action (JCPOA), retains a ban on any activity related to ballistic missiles until 2023. France and the UK say Iran, in supplying drones, is in breach of obligations under parts of the JCPOA and the missile technology control regime that limits the proliferation of missiles.

The west has the ability to “snapback” on some sanctions if it asserts Iran is breaching the JCPOA.

More practically it is inconceivable that the west will resume negotiations about renewing the nuclear deal so long as there is clear evidence that Iran is supplying arms to help Russia defeat Ukraine. The talks are effectively on hold until after the US midterm elections, even though Iran is continuing to expand its use of more sophisticated centrifuges.

The Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson, Naser Kanani, in his weekly press conference again denied Iran was supplying drones to Russia, challenging claims by the US, Ukraine and many arms specialists that Iranian-manufactured Shahed-136 drones were in clear use.

He said: “Iran has repeatedly declared that it is not a party to the war between Russia and Ukraine. Iran has not exported any weapons to any of the warring parties. As we have said many times, Iran’s foreign policy is based on opposing war, and regarding the war in Ukraine, we are also against war, and we are trying to end the military approach in this field.”

The Iranian president, Ebrahim Raisi, has in the recent past spoken of a new military pact with Russia, but not referred to a specific deal on drone exports. Iranian journalists have repeatedly challenged the foreign ministry about its denials.

The US warned on Monday that it would take action against companies and nations working with Iran’s drone program, describing the deepening alliance between Moscow and Tehran as “a profound threat”.

“Anyone doing business with Iran that could have any link to UAVs or ballistic missile developments or the flow of arms from Iran to Russia should be very careful and do their due diligence – the US will not hesitate to use sanctions or take actions against perpetrators,” said a State Department spokesperson.

Oleksiy Kuleba, the head of the Kyiv military administration, said last week that explosions at a military base 75km south of the city, wounding one, had been carried out by these drones.

The highly effective “kamikaze” drones have been used with great effect, and are seen as a cheap alternative to missiles.

EU foreign ministers imposed sanctions on 11 Iranian security officers and four entities including the morality police on Monday in response to the crackdown on protests triggered by the death in police custody of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Kurd.

The EU list goes further than the recently announced British and US sanctions, but still stops short of the systematic attack on Iranian regime supporters and family members in Europe that is being sought by some Iranians.

In common with Washington, the EU sanctioned Iran’s morality police and two of its key figures, Mohammad Rostami and Haj Ahmad Mirzaei. In addition, the EU designates the Iranian Law Enforcement Forces (LEF), as well as a number of its local chiefs, for their role in the repression of the protests. The EU also listed Issa Zarepour, the Iranian minister of information and communications

	<p>technology, for his responsibility over the internet shutdown. The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps cyber-defence command was also the subject of sanctions.</p> <p>Anoosheh Ashoori, one of the former British-Iranian dual nationals released from Evin prison after nearly five years in detention, said the west needed to go much further in enforcing sanctions. “There is no point imposing sanctions only on the morality police that are not going to come to Europe. But there are a large number of children and relatives of the regime that, like the Russian oligarchs, like living the high life here and have assets here.</p> <p>“Britain cannot have dealings with a regime that kills children and detains people for the amount of hair they show. This regime is brutal and has no red lines. Britain will be asked when this regime falls whether it was on the right side of history.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 China delays key economic data releases</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/18/china-delays-key-economic-data-releases-amid-communist-party-congress">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/18/china-delays-key-economic-data-releases-amid-communist-party-congress</a>
GIST	<p>China has said it will delay the release of economic growth figures, which had been due to be published as the country’s leadership gathers for a key meeting set to hand president <a href="#">Xi Jinping</a> a historic third term in office.</p> <p>The announcement came one day before analysts had expected Beijing to publish some of its weakest quarterly growth figures since 2020 with the economy hobbled by Covid-19 restrictions and a real estate crisis.</p> <p>The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said on Monday the release of growth figures for the third quarter along with a host of other economic data would be “postponed”, without specifying a reason or giving a new timeline.</p> <p>The delay comes as officials from <a href="#">China’s ruling Communist party meet in Beijing for their 20th Congress</a>, which is set to rubber stamp president Xi Jinping’s bid to rule for another term.</p> <p>Zhao Chenxin, senior official at the National Development and Reform Commission, told reporters on Monday that “the economy rebounded significantly in the third quarter”.</p> <p>“From a global perspective, China’s economic performance is still outstanding,” he said.</p> <p>But many analysts expect the world’s second-largest economy to struggle to reach its growth target this year of about 5.5%, with the International Monetary Fund lowering its forecast for GDP expansion to 3.2%.</p> <p>A panel of experts polled by AFP last week predicted an average of 3% growth in 2022 – a long way off the 8.1% seen last year.</p> <p>That would be China’s weakest growth rate in four decades, excluding 2020 when the global economy was hammered by the emergence of the coronavirus.</p> <p>The NBS said it would also postpone the release of monthly data on indicators including real estate and retail sales.</p> <p>Last week, customs authorities delayed the release of September trade figures without providing an explanation.</p>



Nick Marro, lead for global trade at the Economist Intelligence Unit, told AFP that signs point to “a really ugly Q3 data print, at a time when the party is focused on highlighting its policy achievements, while minimising any missteps”.

Alicia Garcia Herrero, chief economist at Natixis, said “nothing, not even GDP data release, can disturb the coronation of Xi Jinping”. The delay “puts China in a bind”, Marro added.

“If it comes out with a rosier-than-expected data print, the national statistics bureau will inevitably face questions around data veracity,” he said.

China’s economy has been hit hard by the government’s strict zero-Covid policy.

The country is the last of the world’s major economies to continue to follow the strategy, which imposes tight travel restrictions, mass PCR testing and obligatory quarantines.

It also involves sudden and strict lockdowns - including of businesses and factories - that have disrupted production and weighed heavily on household consumption.

China is also battling an unprecedented crisis in its real estate sector – historically a major driver of growth that accounts for more than a quarter of GDP when combined with construction.

Following years of explosive growth fuelled by easy access to loans, Beijing launched a crackdown on excessive debt in 2020.

Property sales are now falling across the country, leaving many developers struggling and some owners refusing to pay their mortgages for unfinished homes.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 UN warns against alarmism: 8B population</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/oct/18/global-population-growth-8-billion-unfpa-united-nations-warning-alarmism">https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/oct/18/global-population-growth-8-billion-unfpa-united-nations-warning-alarmism</a>
GIST	<p>The world must not engage in “population alarmism” as the number of people living on Earth nears 8 billion, a senior UN official has said.</p> <p>The global population is projected to reach that milestone <a href="#">on 15 November</a>, with some commentators expressing worries about the impact of the growing number on a world already struggling with huge inequality, the climate crisis, and conflict-fuelled displacement and migration.</p> <p>However, Dr Natalia Kanem, executive director of <a href="#">the UN Population Fund</a> (UNFPA), urged countries not to panic but instead focus on helping the women, children and marginalised people who were most vulnerable to demographic change.</p> <p>“I realise this moment might not be celebrated by all. Some <a href="#">express concerns</a> that our world is overpopulated, with far too many people and insufficient resources to sustain their lives. I am here to say clearly that the sheer number of human lives is not a cause for fear,” she said.</p> <p>Kanem said that if governments focused on the numbers alone they ran the risk of imposing population controls that had been shown by history to be “ineffective and even dangerous”.</p> <p>“From forced sterilisation campaigns to restrictions on family planning and contraception, we are still reckoning with the lasting impact of policies intended to reverse, or in some cases to accelerate, population growth,” she said.</p>

“And we cannot repeat the egregious violations of human rights ... that rob women of their ability to decide whether [or] when to become pregnant, if at all. [Population](#) alarmism: it distracts us from what we should be focused on.”

As a result of falling birthrates, the pace of worldwide population growth, which reached a recorded peak at just over 2% a year in the late 1960s, has now fallen below 1%.

However, the global picture is more varied than ever before. The UN estimates that about 60% of people live in countries with fertility levels below the recognised [replacement level](#) (when a population exactly replaces itself from one generation to the next) of an average of 2.1 births for every woman.

At the other end of the spectrum, just eight countries, including Nigeria, Ethiopia and the Philippines, are forecast to account for half of all population growth by 2050. One of those countries, [India](#), is expected to pass China from next year and become the world’s most populous country.

Kanem said the picture could also be mixed in places where new immigrant communities had a higher birthrate than the country in which they had arrived. But this difference, where it existed, should not be “manipulated” to stoke social tensions, she added.

“These are not causes for fear. In fact, in terms of the ageing crisis, we’re going to have to look for solutions that include migration of people who are willing to help with elder care etc,” she said. “While there may be some variability ... this should not stoke xenophobia and hatred of ‘the other’, which sometimes this type of dynamic is manipulated in order to do.”

Earlier this month, the Sun on Sunday reported that an unnamed British government minister had floated the idea of encouraging a baby boom by giving tax cuts to women who have more children.

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HEADLINE	10/17 Russia ultimatum to nuclear plant workers
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-gives-ukraine-nuclear-plant-workers-ultimatum-to-pick-a-side-11666025113">https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-gives-ukraine-nuclear-plant-workers-ultimatum-to-pick-a-side-11666025113</a>
GIST	<p>Ukrainian technicians working to ensure the safe operation of the Russian-occupied <a href="#">Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant</a> have been told by occupation authorities that they have until Thursday to choose sides in the escalating <a href="#">struggle for control</a> of the reactor complex.</p> <p>Senior officials of Russia’s Rosatom said Ukrainian staff who sign up as employees of Moscow’s atomic-energy company would keep their jobs and could be offered Russian passports, according to plant workers, Ukrainian officials and diplomats posted to the United Nations’ nuclear agency.</p> <p>Russian President <a href="#">Vladimir Putin</a> declared earlier this month that the nuclear plant, Europe’s largest, is the property of the Russian Federation. Workers fear that not signing could cost them their jobs and make them targets for occupation authorities.</p> <p>Under Ukrainian law, joining Rosatom could make the technicians collaborators and subject to arrest, trial and imprisonment. Ukraine’s military <a href="#">has been rolling back Russian advances</a>. The front line in the area is just across a river from the plant.</p> <p>“If they don’t sign the statement, they won’t have a livelihood, to feed their family, children,” said a worker who left the plant this summer and made his way to Ukrainian-held territory. “If they sign, they will be a traitor and a collaborator...it all stinks.”</p> <p>For seven months, the nuclear plant has been patrolled by Russian soldiers, ringed with land mines, and run by Ukrainian specialists, who now number around 3,000—down from 11,000 before the war—and still answer to their government’s atomic-energy company.</p>

But on Wednesday, a small team of Rosatom officials summoned the plant's Ukrainian management into an assembly hall and handed out forms to join the Russian company. When the officials asked if there were any questions, the Ukrainians silently stood up and walked out of the hall, a plant employee and Ukrainian officials said.

Since then, Ukraine's state nuclear company Energoatom has sent public messages and quietly reached out over encrypted chat apps and in private calls to lobby the staff: Keep working. Don't sign.

"The idea of safety is like a religion in the plant," said Oleksandr Kharchenko, an adviser to Ukraine's energy ministry. "They know that if most of them leave it will create a huge danger for the station itself."

There may be concessions for workers who sign the Russian contracts, since they are needed to prevent an accident, Ukrainian officials said. They wouldn't necessarily be labeled as collaborators.

"Staff at the plant are being forced to make a hugely difficult decision for themselves and their loved ones," Rafael Grossi, director general of the U.N. atomic energy watchdog, based in Vienna, said in a statement. "The enormous pressure they are facing must stop."

The shrinking—and increasingly insufficient—crew of employees still working at Zaporizhzhia does so under the fear that abandoning it could risk a nuclear catastrophe. Rosatom doesn't have the manpower or expertise to run the plant without the Ukrainian staff, said Ukrainian officials and independent Western nuclear analysts who helped modernize the Soviet-era plant.

The company has unsuccessfully tried to lure its own employees to leave Russia and work at the plant, in an active war zone.

A small number of Zaporizhzhia's Ukrainian staff sympathize with Moscow, plant workers say, but most of those still present have stayed on out of a sense of duty—or in hope that Ukrainian forces will soon end the Russian occupation.

The employment registration forms distributed by Rosatom officials juxtaposed the horrors of war with mundane human-resources-speak. "What can be expected upon transfer," one form says: "Accumulated vacation days, accumulated seniority, accumulated pension contributions will be taken into account in the subsequent registration."

The Wall Street Journal spoke to plant workers, Ukrainian energy department officials and diplomats and saw copies of the transfer forms Rosatom gave the staff and an internal memo circulated to the plant workers' union, offering the Ukrainian government's advice on how to handle the standoff.

The Kremlin and Russia's Defense Ministry didn't respond to requests for comment. The new arrangement is based on a decree in which Mr. Putin tasked a state-owned company with "overseeing the reliable operation of the plant's power units while giving absolute and unconditional priority to safety regulations," a Rosatom representative wrote in an email. The company didn't elaborate.

Ukraine has tried to stall the takeover by turning to the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency, whose Mr. Grossi has been shuttling between Kyiv and Moscow trying to persuade Mr. Putin to allow a military-free zone around the plant instead.

The stress on plant staff intensified after Mr. Putin said on Sept. 30 that Russia would formally claim four Ukrainian oblasts—including Zaporizhzhia, the region surrounding the plant—none of which he fully controls.

He then decreed that the Zaporizhzhia plant was a Russian federal entity, and established a new state company, with \$2 billion of startup capital, called The Joint Stock Company Operating Organization of the Zaporozhye Nuclear Power Plant, using the Russian spelling for the location.

In the past two weeks, the plant's Ukrainian director general, Ihor Murashov, and a deputy director general were detained by Russian forces after refusing to sign forms transferring their jobs and loyalties to the new Russian company.

Mr. Murashov had taken up the post just days before the Russian invasion and was popular with the Ukrainian staff after overseeing the plant's operations throughout the occupation.

The director general was freed as part of a mediation led by the IAEA. The deputy director remains missing.

On Oct. 10, Russian soldiers abducted Valeriy Martyniuk, Zaporizhzhia's deputy director general for human resources, according to Energoatom, the state energy company. Mr. Martyniuk's whereabouts is unknown.

"They seem to be moving in the direction of trying to put in place their proxy administrators," said Michael Carpenter, U.S. permanent representative to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, an intergovernmental security group.

"It's an open question of whether they can proceed down this path for that much longer, because Zaporizhzhia Oblast is under pressure militarily from the Ukrainians.... And what Russia thought was realistic a couple of months ago or even weeks ago is no longer looking quite so realistic," Amb. Carpenter said.

The situation at the plant remains tense. On Monday, fighting near a substation knocked out the final functioning power line, disconnecting the station from the Ukrainian grid, Energoatom said. The plant was forced to use backup diesel generators to cool spent fuel and power ventilation fans, something the IAEA has repeatedly warned is dangerous and unsustainable.

Both sides have blamed the other for deliberately shelling the plant.

Electricity flickers on and off in the nearby city of Enerhodar, where workers live in apartments that have been looted of their appliances by Russian troops, on streets pocked with the craters of shelling and patrolled by armored Z-painted Russian military vehicles. Cell connection, now provided by Russian telecoms, has been spotty.

"There is an atmosphere of fear," said a worker who left earlier this year but remains in contact with colleagues. "People are scared, they don't know what to do."

Across the Dnipro River in the Ukrainian-held city of Zaporizhzhia, Russian shelling of apartment buildings and other civilian infrastructure has killed dozens of people in recent weeks. Before the annexation announcement, around 2,000 people arrived in the city from Russian-held territory every day. New border controls have reduced that number to around 60, according to local officials.

Plant workers trying to escape navigate a strange wartime bureaucracy of requesting vacation days to slip through wartime military checkpoints, said a worker who made it to a spa resort in Ukrainian-held territory.

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HEADLINE	10/17 New England risks winter blackouts
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-england-risks-winter-blackouts-as-gas-supplies-tighten-11665999002?mod=hp_trending_now_article_pos3">https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-england-risks-winter-blackouts-as-gas-supplies-tighten-11665999002?mod=hp_trending_now_article_pos3</a>
GIST	New England power producers are preparing for potential strain on the grid this winter as a surge in natural-gas demand abroad threatens to reduce supplies they need to generate electricity.

New England, which relies on natural-gas imports to bridge winter supply gaps, is now competing with European countries for shipments of liquefied natural gas, following [Russia's halt of most pipeline gas to the continent](#). Severe cold spells in the Northeast could reduce the amount of gas available to generate electricity as more of it is burned to heat homes.

The region's power-grid operator, ISO New England Inc., has warned that an extremely cold winter could strain the reliability of the grid and potentially result in the need for rolling blackouts to keep electricity supply and demand in balance. The warning comes as executives and analysts predict power producers could have to pay as much as several times more than last year for gas deliveries if severe weather creates urgent need for spot-market purchases.

"The most challenging aspect of this winter is what's happening around the world and the extreme volatility in the markets," said Vamsi Chadalavada, the grid operator's chief operating officer. "If you are in the commercial sector, at what point do you buy fuel?"

Power producers in New England are limited in their ability to store fuel on site and face challenges in contracting for gas supplies, as most pipeline capacity is reserved by gas utilities serving homes and businesses. Most generators tend to procure only a portion of imports with fixed-price agreements and instead rely on the spot market, where [gas prices have been volatile](#), to fill shortfalls.

"Anybody who is depending on the spot market for their natural-gas supply is probably going to have a pretty significant sticker shock," said Tanya Bodell, a partner at consulting firm StoneTurn who advises energy companies in New England.

New England has been grappling with fuel-supply challenges for more than a decade because the region has limited pipeline capacity. Imports of LNG can make up more than a third of the region's natural-gas supply during periods of peak demand, according to the Energy Information Administration. The Jones Act, a law restricting the movement of ships between U.S. ports, makes maritime delivery of domestic supplies nearly impossible, so the region relies on gas produced abroad.

Now, intense competition for LNG cargoes driven by European demand makes securing supply ad hoc a costly proposition. This summer, the European benchmark price for natural gas topped \$100 per million British thermal units. Gas prices in New England, by comparison, rarely reach much above \$30, said Eugene Kim, a research director at energy consulting firm Wood Mackenzie—a differential that encourages suppliers to provide gas to Europe rather than New England.

This summer, the governors of New England states sent a letter to U.S. Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm citing high natural-gas prices as a reason to waive the Jones Act and allow for domestic LNG imports to the region. They also requested more coordination with the federal government to ensure energy reliability and help modernizing New England's heating-oil reserve.

New England residents are facing some of their largest electricity bills in years and are likely to pay even more this winter because of higher gas prices. Utilities purchase electricity from generators on the wholesale market and recoup those costs from customers.

Thad Hill, chief executive of Calpine Corp., which operates several plants in the region, said he expects fuel supplies this winter to be sufficient but expensive. The circumstances, he said, might warrant the need for the grid operator to implement stronger incentives for power producers to store or contract for firm supplies ahead of winter.

"The goal should be to put in place a market mechanism that's actually durable for all but the most egregious situations," he said.

New England's challenges are becoming more acute as older coal, oil and nuclear-fueled generators shut, leaving gas-fired ones to serve a greater percentage of demand. Since 2013, about 5,200 megawatts of that capacity has retired, according to the New England ISO, an amount equal to roughly a quarter of peak

	<p>winter demand. Some older plants risk closing faster than they can be replaced by renewable-energy projects, which account for the majority of new capacity proposed for the region.</p> <p>The changes to the region's power mix have left it increasingly reliant on imports of gas as well as oil to power the remaining plants, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine has roiled the global markets for both commodities. Similar to gas, fuel oil is used for home heating and power generation, creating a tight market for the resource on cold days.</p> <p>The New England ISO expects that the grid can weather a mild-to-moderate winter without significant reliability challenges. However, it has warned that electricity demand could threaten to surge beyond available supply after multiple sustained periods of severely cold weather, which would result in calls for conservation similar to those issued in California in September during a regionwide heat wave.</p> <p>LS Power Development LLC has been working to prepare its two gas-fired power plants in New England, one of which can run on oil as backup. Nathan Hanson, president of its LS Power Generation unit, said the company is filling the one plant's backup tanks with oil and has an option to procure for the other plant an emergency supply of gas for use during peak demand.</p> <p>"The grid overall is in a much tighter position," he said. "If we get a sustained cold period in New England this winter, we'll be in a very similar position as California was this summer."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 Families still struggle to find baby formula</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/families-still-struggle-to-find-baby-formula-nearly-one-year-after-shortages-began-11666004401?mod=hp_listb_pos5">https://www.wsj.com/articles/families-still-struggle-to-find-baby-formula-nearly-one-year-after-shortages-began-11666004401?mod=hp_listb_pos5</a>
GIST	<p>Many U.S. households are still struggling <a href="#">to find baby formula</a>, almost a year since supplies thinned on store shelves and eight months after <a href="#">a nationwide recall</a>.</p> <p>Adults in roughly one-third of households with infant children who typically use formula had trouble obtaining it last month, according to a recent survey by the U.S. Census Bureau. Nearly one in five of affected households has less than a week of formula on hand, the survey showed.</p> <p>The survey offers one of the most detailed views yet into <a href="#">the nationwide formula shortage</a>, and comes as lawmakers are taking steps to address ongoing supply issues.</p> <p>The census findings came from its Household Pulse Survey, launched in 2020 to assess how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected people's lives and livelihoods. The challenges were most acute for lower-income families, according to the survey, which had responses from nearly 51,000 households between Sept. 14 and Sept. 26.</p> <p>On average, 40% of adults with household incomes less than \$75,000 reported difficulty finding formula the previous week, twice the rate of those whose household incomes topped \$75,000.</p> <p>Parents and caregivers have been scouring stores and websites to find baby formula this year after a February recall by <a href="#">Abbott Laboratories</a>, one of two top U.S. formula makers, compounded <a href="#">ongoing supply-chain problems</a>.</p> <p>For Meadow Burkhart, the hunt for formula begins when her 5-month-old son is on his last two cans of Similac Soy baby formula. At that point, the single mother in New Port Richey, Fla., starts calling around to see where she can buy more, not wanting to waste gas driving to stores where it is sold out.</p> <p>If she can't find the formula nearby, Ms. Burkhart searches Facebook groups where hard-to-find formulas are sold, but like many others she has been <a href="#">the victim of online scammers</a> who take her money but never deliver the goods.</p>



“I really don’t recommend it, but I have no other choice at the moment,” said Ms. Burkhart, who works in fast food. “I don’t ever want to get caught without his formula.”

The pandemic caused disruptions in formula supplies beginning in 2020. Nationwide out-of-stock levels for powdered formula increased during 2021, reaching 10% in November, according to market-research firm IRI. The firm said that typically out-of-stock rates for food and other merchandise are at 5% and that outages above 10% are considered a problem.

Out-of-stock levels worsened significantly last spring and [peaked at 30% in July](#) before declining, IRI data show. About 18% of powdered baby formula was out of stock in the month ended Sept. 30, according to the firm’s data.

Some [small formula makers](#) say government support for startups could help improve supplies. They are looking to Congress to create incentives that would help them offset the risk and expense of building highly specialized new manufacturing plants to expand their capacity.

“We’re getting out of the shortage, but the crisis still lingers,” said Laura Modi, chief executive of formula startup Bobbie. She noted that the company is currently assessing whether to build its own manufacturing facility.

Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D., Conn.), who chairs the House Appropriations Committee, said she plans to introduce legislation next month aimed at addressing the roots of the supply shortage and fostering the growth of smaller domestic manufacturers, but she declined to give specific details.

“For me the underlying piece of all of this is market consolidation,” she said.

Some top Republicans have threatened to hold up future funding for the Food and Drug Administration unless the agency provides more explanation for its missteps during the formula shortage, calling [a recent internal review](#) inadequate.

“I cannot support rewarding FDA with additional resources after a failure of this magnitude, especially when this report demonstrates that the agency does not take accountability seriously,” Sen. Richard Burr (R., N.C.), the top Republican on the Senate health committee, wrote in a letter this month.

Last month, the FDA said it would continue to allow [formula imported from other countries](#) to be sold in the U.S. on a long-term basis, so long as its manufacturers are working to meet all U.S. regulatory guidelines by the fall of 2025, including around specific nutrition requirements and labeling.

“That’s a huge shift from an industry that before this crisis, 98% of the formula purchased in the country was manufactured domestically,” said Brian Dittmeier, senior director of public policy for the National WIC Association. The group represents providers of the Women, Infants and Children supplemental nutrition program, a federal program that [provides formula at no cost](#) to families.

Mr. Dittmeier said formula supplies overall have improved significantly since the worst of the shortages earlier this year and were back to normal in many areas. However, some places are still experiencing problems, including from families overbuying and hoarding formula, he said.

Kendamil, a British formula maker owned by Kendal Nutricare, is one company seeking to help crack open the U.S. formula market.

Kendamil started working to gain access to the U.S. in 2017, just two years after the brand was launched, according to William and Dylan McMahon, who co-founded the company with their father, Ross McMahon. Kendamil fast-tracked its efforts earlier this year in light of the shortage, the McMahon brothers said, securing permission from the FDA to ship formula to the U.S. in May and flying in more than one million formula cans to date via a White House effort dubbed Operation Fly Formula.



	Now, the company is working to finalize FDA requirements for longer term distribution in the U.S., such as completing clinical trials tied to growth studies, according to the McMahons. Kendamil is investing \$30 million to at least double its production capacity next year, with plans to be able to supply the U.S. market with one billion bottle feeds a year by 2025, the McMahons said.
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 EU sanctions Russia except in key sectors</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/world/europe/eu-sanctions-russia-ukraine.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/world/europe/eu-sanctions-russia-ukraine.html</a>
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS — Eight months into the war in Ukraine, and eight rounds of frantic negotiations later, Europe’s sanctions against Russia run hundreds of pages long and have in many places cut to the bone.</p> <p>Since February, the European Union has named 1,236 people and 155 companies for sanctions, freezing their assets and blocking their access to the bloc. It has banned the trade of products in nearly 1,000 categories and hundreds of subcategories. It has put in place a near-total embargo on Russian oil. About one-third of the bloc’s exports to Russia by value and two-thirds of imports have been banned.</p> <p>But even now some goods and sectors remain conspicuously exempted. A look at just a few items reveals the intense back-room bargaining and arm-twisting by some nations and by private industry to protect sectors they deem too valuable to give up — as well as the compromises the European Union has made to maintain consensus.</p> <p>The Belgians have shielded trade in Russian diamonds. The Greeks ship Russian oil unimpeded. France and several other nations still import Russian uranium for nuclear power generation.</p> <p>The net impact of these exemptions on the effectiveness of Europe’s penalties against Russia is hard to assess, but politically, they have allowed the 27 members of the bloc to pull together an otherwise vast sanctions regime with exceptional speed and unanimity.</p> <p>“Ultimately, this is the price of unanimity to hold together this coalition, and in the grander scheme of things the sanctions are really working,” said Jacob Kirkegaard, a senior fellow in the Brussels office of the research group the German Marshall Fund, citing Russia’s diminished access to military technology as evidence.</p> <p>“We would love to have everything included, diamonds and every other special interest hit, but I am of the opinion that, if sparing them is what it takes to keep everyone together, so be it,” he added.</p> <p>The Ukrainian government has criticized some of the exemptions, with President Volodymyr Zelensky chiding European nations for continuing to permit business with Russia, saying they are skirting sacrifices.</p> <p>“There are people for whom the diamonds sold in Antwerp are more important than the battle we are waging. Peace is worth much more than diamonds,” Mr. Zelensky said to the Belgian Parliament during an address by video link in late March.</p> <p><b>Keeping Diamonds Coming</b></p> <p>The continued success of Belgium and the broad diamond sector in keeping the Russian diamond trade flowing exemplifies the sacred cows some E.U. nations refuse to sacrifice, even as their peers accept pain to punish the Kremlin.</p> <p>Exports of rough diamonds are very lucrative for Russia, and they flow to the Belgian port of Antwerp, a historically important diamond hub.</p> <p>The trade, worth 1.8 billion euros a year — about \$1.75 billion — has been shielded in consecutive rounds of the bloc’s sanctions, despite being raised as a possible target soon after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in late February.</p>

The Belgian government has said that it has never asked the European Commission, the E.U. executive body that drafts the measures, to remove diamonds from any sanctions list and that if diamonds were added, it would go along.

Technically speaking, that may be true. But the latest round of penalties, adopted this month, exposed the intensive interventions when a coordination error occurred among the various services in the bloc that are involved in the technical preparation of sanctions.

The incident, described to The New York Times by several diplomats involved as “farcical,” shows how the lobbying works. The diplomats spoke anonymously in order to describe freely what happened.

The European Commission over the course of September prepared the latest round of sanctions and left diamonds off that list.

But the European External Action Service — the E.U.’s equivalent of a foreign service or state department, which works with the commission to prepare sanctions — did not get the memo that diamonds should remain exempted and included in its own draft listings Alrosa, the Russian state-owned diamonds company.

Once Alrosa had been put on the draft document, removing it became difficult. Spotting the error, Poland and other hard-line pro-Ukraine countries in the bloc dragged out the negotiations over the package as much as they could on the basis that Alrosa should indeed face sanctions.

In the end, the need for unanimity and speed prevailed, and Alrosa continues to export to the European Union, at least until the next round of sanctions is negotiated. In proposals for a fresh, ninth round of sanctions, presented by Poland and its allies last week, diamonds were again included, but formal talks on the new set of penalties have not yet begun.

A spokesman for the European External Action Service declined to comment, saying it does not comment on internal procedures involved in preparing sanctions.

### **Nuclear Power**

Most exemptions have not been as clear-cut as diamonds because they have involved more complex industries or services, or affected more than one country.

Uranium exported from Russia for use in civil nuclear power production falls under this category. Nuclear power plants in France, Hungary, Slovakia, Finland and other countries depend on Russian civilian uranium exports.

The trade is worth 200 million euros, or about \$194 million, [according to Greenpeace](#), which has been lobbying for its ban. Germany and other E.U. countries have supported the calls to ban civilian nuclear imports from Russia, making this another issue likely to come up in the next round of sanctions talks.

In August, Mr. Zelensky also highlighted the persistent protection of the Russian nuclear exports to Europe just as Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant came under fire.

Some supporters of keeping Russian uranium running say that France and the other countries’ ability to generate electricity by operating their nuclear power plants during an acute energy crisis is more important than the political or financial gains that could come from a ban through E.U. sanctions, at least for now.

### **Tankers in the Night**

One of the most complex and important lobbying efforts to protect a European industry from sanctions is the one mounted by Greek diplomats to allow Greek-owned tankers to transport Russian oil to non-European destinations.

This has facilitated one of the Kremlin's biggest revenue streams. More than half of the vessels transporting Russia's oil are Greek-owned, according to information aggregated from MarineTraffic, a shipping data platform.

Supporters of the Greek shipping industry say that if it pulled out of that business, others would step in to deliver Russian oil to places like India and China. Experts say lining up enough tankers to make up for a total Greek pullout would not be simple, considering the sheer size of Greek-interest fleets and their dominance in this trade.

According to European diplomats involved in the negotiations, their Greek counterparts were able to exempt Greek shipping companies from the oil embargo in a tough round of talks last May and June.

Since then, the E.U. has come around to a United States-led idea to keep facilitating the transport of Russian oil, in order to avert a global oil-market meltdown, but to do so at a capped price to limit Russia's revenues.

The Greeks saw an opening: They would continue to transport Russian oil, but at the capped price. The bloc offered them additional concessions, and Greece agreed that the shipping of Russian oil would be banned if the price cap was not observed.

Even if the economic benefits of such exemptions are hard to define, from a political perspective, the continued protection of some goods and industries is creating bad blood among E.U. members.

Governments that have readily taken big hits through sanctions to support Ukraine, sacrificing revenues and jobs, are embittered that their partners in the bloc continue to doggedly protect their own interests.

The divisions deepen a sense of disconnect between those more hawkish pro-Ukraine E.U. nations nearer Ukraine and those farther away, although geographical proximity is far from the only determinant of countries' attitudes toward the war.

And given that the bloc is a constant negotiating arena on many issues, some warn that what goes around eventually will come around.

"This may be a raw calculation of national interests, but it's going to linger," Mr. Kirkegaard said.

"Whoever doesn't contribute now through sacrifice, next time there's a budget or some other debate, it's going to come back and haunt them."

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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 Russia military jet crashes in Ukraine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/17/world/europe/russia-military-jet-crash-yeysk.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/17/world/europe/russia-military-jet-crash-yeysk.html</a>
GIST	<p>At least 13 people, including three children, were killed in southern Russia on Monday after a Russian military jet crashed into the courtyard of a large apartment building during a training mission, emergency officials said.</p> <p>The Su-34 warplane crashed in Yeysk, a port and resort town across the Sea of Azov from the Ukrainian city of Mariupol, military officials told Russian news outlets. The Russian Defense Ministry said the jet was on a training flight when one of its engines caught fire and it plunged into a residential area.</p> <p>The Russian Emergency Ministry <a href="#">wrote on the messaging app Telegram</a> early Tuesday that rescue efforts were complete. An additional 19 people were injured, the ministry said.</p> <p>The crash sparked a fire that burned for three hours, according to the ministry.</p> <p>Anna Minkova, the deputy governor of the Krasnodar region, <a href="#">wrote on Telegram</a> that some of the victims suffered severe burns.</p>

	<p>The pilots ejected themselves, <a href="#">according to</a> Russia's state-run news agency, Tass.</p> <p>The fire engulfed several floors of the nine-story building, the regional governor, Veniamin Kondratiev, said on <a href="#">Telegram</a>. He said initial reports indicated that 17 apartments had been damaged but added later that the extent of the damage was still being assessed.</p> <p>The Russian Investigative Committee, the country's main investigation agency, said on Telegram that forensic specialists had been dispatched to the scene to determine the cause of the crash.</p> <p>In May, an <a href="#">Su-34 crashed</a> through the roof of a two-story home in Chernihiv, in northern Ukraine. The residents, who were in the basement, survived. The pilot also survived after ejecting.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 Ukraine slows advance in east</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/17/world/russia-ukraine-war-news?action=click&amp;pgtype=Article&amp;module=&amp;state=default&amp;region=footer&amp;context=breakout link back to briefing#ukrainian-forces-are-slowing-their-advance-in-the-east-as-russia-tries-to-regroup">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/17/world/russia-ukraine-war-news?action=click&amp;pgtype=Article&amp;module=&amp;state=default&amp;region=footer&amp;context=breakout link back to briefing#ukrainian-forces-are-slowing-their-advance-in-the-east-as-russia-tries-to-regroup</a>
GIST	<p>DONETSK PROVINCE, Ukraine — After chasing retreating Russian troops across a stretch of rolling hills and forests for a month, Ukrainian troops in the eastern Donbas region have slowed almost to a halt. And in recent days, Russian reinforcements have rushed to the front line, attempting a counterattack to break Ukraine's momentum.</p> <p>Moscow is waging war on two fronts, one on the battlefield, where it has sustained steady losses, including in the Donbas region, the main focus of its invading force since April.</p> <p>On another front, Russia has escalated its attacks with long-range weapons on civilian targets across Ukraine — including drone strikes far off in Kyiv, the capital, that left at least four people dead on Monday.</p> <p>The military campaign in the east, meanwhile, has become a battle of shelling, positioning and surveillance where Russian and Ukrainian troops square off just a few hundred yards apart.</p> <p>In a village near the front line on Sunday, a steady volley of mortars rained down on a Ukrainian position as a radio crackled in a small farmhouse, calling for assistance to find where the Russians were firing from.</p> <p>“Let’s get to work,” one of the Ukrainian soldiers said, picking up a small drone and heading out the door near the border between Donetsk and Luhansk provinces, which together make up the Donbas region.</p> <p>He was part of a drone reconnaissance team from the National Guard’s Dnipro 1 battalion that was working close to the front line, sheltering from shelling while sending up drones to hunt for a range of Russian targets, from tanks to the elusive mortar team.</p> <p>Russian troops had been grinding forward slowly until the Ukrainian Army mounted a successful counteroffensive at the beginning of September, sweeping across a large swath of northeastern Ukraine, recapturing strategic cities in Donetsk and threatening Russia’s hold on Luhansk.</p> <p>The Russian side is trying to hang on to the important transport hubs of Svatove and Kreminna. If Ukraine can recapture those two towns, it could break Moscow’s grip on much of Luhansk Province.</p> <p>But Russian troops seem to have regrouped after their headlong flight last month. They have tanks, artillery and mortars and hold positions on high ground across a valley. The men of Dnipro 1 also said there were signs of newly mobilized Russian soldiers on the ground.</p>

The villages now behind the Ukrainian frontline are almost deserted; burned-out tanks and military trucks sit beside the road and in the pine forests.

Svetlana, who was sitting near the road on Sunday afternoon selling mushrooms gathered from the woods behind her house, said she came back home as soon as Ukrainian troops had recaptured her village. She had been jobless and found it hard to survive as a refugee. “For two weeks now, we have been feeling some relief,” she said.

Closer to the front line, fresh craters from mortar fire pocked the road.

The Ukrainian reconnaissance team’s confidence was buoyed by recent successes. Five days earlier, the Russians attacked with a large force of 50 to 60 men but were repelled, said one of the officers, Filin, who gave only his code name in keeping with military protocol. The next day, they tried again with a smaller force but also were pushed back, said Filin, 32.

Then the Dnipro 1 team carried out an improvised attack, dropping a grenade from a small commercial drone onto a Russian armored vehicle where a group of soldiers was gathered. The next day they surveilled the area and saw one man dead on the ground where the grenade had hit, apparently abandoned by his comrades.

“After that they stopped the attacks,” said another member of the team, who uses the code name Kon. “They don’t like the sound of drones.”

The Russians have resumed their incessant artillery and mortar strikes but have not tried to advance again, the soldiers said.

Some of the Russian soldiers seemed poorly trained and inexperienced, they said. But others were skilled operators: They have jamming devices that interfere with the drones and can maneuver their tanks to avoid Ukrainian attacks — hiding in the forest and moving out to fire before swiftly disappearing, according to the reconnaissance team’s leader, who goes by Android.

Still, after a month on the move, the Ukrainians said they were confident they would keep advancing.

“For us, every meter of recaptured land, gives us power,” said Duke, the team’s company commander.

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HEADLINE	10/18 Ukraine, Russia exchange prisoners
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/18/world/russia-ukraine-war-news?action=click&amp;pgtype=Article&amp;module=&amp;state=default&amp;region=footer&amp;context=breakout_link_back_to_briefing#ukraine-and-russia-exchange-prisoners-many-of-them-women">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/18/world/russia-ukraine-war-news?action=click&amp;pgtype=Article&amp;module=&amp;state=default&amp;region=footer&amp;context=breakout_link_back_to_briefing#ukraine-and-russia-exchange-prisoners-many-of-them-women</a>
GIST	<p>Russia and Ukraine said they had exchanged dozens of prisoners on Monday, many of them women, the latest sign that the countries are willing to negotiate to free their citizens even as the war escalates.</p> <p>Andriy Yermak, head of the Ukrainian president’s office, said that 108 women who had been prisoners of war had been freed from Russia.</p> <p>“Another large-scale POWs swap was carried out today,” he wrote on Twitter. “Extremely emotional and really special,” he added. He said that those freed included 11 officers and 85 privates and noncommissioned officers.</p> <p>“Now all the ladies will undergo a medical examination and rehabilitation. They will hug their relatives, their children,” he wrote on Twitter. “They will recover.”</p> <p>In his nightly address, President Volodymyr Zelensky said 12 of the released prisoners were civilians. “We do not forget about any of our people — we have to return them all,” he said.</p>

	<p>Mr. Zelensky urged his country's soldiers to remember the value of prisoners: "The more Russian prisoners we have, the sooner we will be able to free our heroes," he said. "Every Ukrainian warrior, every frontline commander should remember this."</p> <p>Russia's defense ministry confirmed the prisoner swap, saying 110 Russian citizens had been freed by the Ukrainian authorities and were returning to Moscow via military transport. Among the prisoners, it said, were 72 Russian sailors from civilian ships who had been held by the Ukrainian authorities since February.</p> <p>It said that two Ukrainian women voluntarily refused to return to Ukraine, preferring to stay in the Russian Federation, a claim that was not confirmed by Ukraine.</p> <p>Late last month, Andriy Yusov, who represents the intelligence department in Ukraine's ministry of defense, said that, as of then, about 800 prisoners of war had been returned to Ukraine in roughly 20 exchanges since Russia's invasion began in February. His statement to journalists gave no details of the mechanism for the swaps and did not say how many Russians were exchanged.</p> <p>Earlier this month, United Nations investigators in Ukraine said they were receiving accounts of Russian forces torturing civilian and military prisoners — sometimes to the point of death. At the same time, they said, people were disappearing frequently in areas controlled by Russia and its proxies.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 EU expands military support of Ukraine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/17/world/russia-ukraine-war-news?action=click&amp;pgtype=Article&amp;module=&amp;state=default&amp;region=footer&amp;context=breakout link back to briefing#the-eu-expands-military-support-of-ukraine-with-funding-and-training">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/17/world/russia-ukraine-war-news?action=click&amp;pgtype=Article&amp;module=&amp;state=default&amp;region=footer&amp;context=breakout link back to briefing#the-eu-expands-military-support-of-ukraine-with-funding-and-training</a>
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS — European Union foreign ministers on Monday signed off on new measures to support Ukraine's battlefield efforts, committing fresh funds for weapons and approving a <a href="#">first-of-its-kind military training mission</a> for Ukrainians.</p> <p>During a meeting in Luxembourg, the ministers agreed to a new commitment of 500 million euros (\$490 million) to compensate E.U. countries for their military donations to Ukraine, bringing the total of this type of support to €3.1 billion since Russia's invasion in late February.</p> <p>The money will come from the European Peace Facility, but so far the reimbursements that many member states are waiting for have been slow to arrive, triggering complaints.</p> <p>The ministers also approved a military training mission for Ukrainian fighters that will be hosted on E.U. soil. The bloc funds and supports military training missions in a handful of African nations, but the new mission would be the first time such training will take place within the E.U. itself.</p> <p>The mission will aim to give thousands of Ukrainians intensive training in areas including sniper skills and how to handle the weapons systems being pledged by Western allies in response to the invasion ordered by President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia.</p> <p>Josep Borrell Fontelles, the bloc's top diplomat, said the mission would have a two-year mandate and a budget of €106.7 million. Some details were still being worked out, including around command and control, diplomats said, but the majority of training will take place in Poland and Germany.</p> <p>Dmytro Kuleba, the Ukrainian foreign minister, joined the meeting by video and asked his country's allies to impose additional sanctions against Russia as well as Iran, which is providing drones that Moscow has used against Ukrainian civilian targets.</p>



	<p>Mr. Borrell was reserved about the request. “We all are thinking about different ways in which we can make life difficult for Putin in terms of funding his war effort,” Mr. Borrell said, adding that the bloc this month had already adopted an eighth sanctions package against Russia.</p> <p>Iran has officially denied supplying Russia with drones for use in Ukraine, but United States and Ukrainian intelligence have identified the drones, which explode on impact, as Iranian.</p> <p>Mr. Borrell said that the E.U. would need to investigate for itself. “Member states have asked us to go forward to collect evidence, all the available evidence and on that basis, work will continue as appropriate,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 China recruits ex-UK military pilots: training</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/17/world/europe/china-recruit-uk-military-pilots.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/17/world/europe/china-recruit-uk-military-pilots.html</a>
GIST	<p>LONDON — China has recruited as many as 30 retired British military pilots, including some who flew sophisticated fighter jets, to train pilots in the People’s Liberation Army, according to Britain’s Defense Ministry. A senior official said the ministry worried that the practice could threaten British national security.</p> <p>Britain said it was working with allies to try to stop the practice, which the official said dated to before the coronavirus pandemic but had gained momentum in recent months. The recruited British pilots, the senior official said, included former members of the Royal Air Force and other branches of the armed forces.</p> <p>None of the retired pilots are suspected of violating the Official Secrets Act, the British law that covers espionage, sabotage and other crimes. But the official said that Britain was determined to tighten the controls on retired service members to guard against training activities that could contravene espionage laws.</p> <p>“We are taking decisive steps to stop Chinese recruitment schemes attempting to head hunt serving and former U.K. Armed Forces pilots to train People’s Liberation Army personnel in the People’s Republic of China,” said a spokesman for the Defense Ministry, who, under department rules, spoke on the condition that he not be named.</p> <p>Britain, however, does not have obvious legal tools to stop retired pilots from accepting training contracts from the Chinese army. The contracts are lucrative — about \$270,000 a year — and are particularly attractive to pilots who retired from active duty several years ago, the official said.</p> <p>China, the official said, has contracted the recruiting to a third party, a private test flying academy in South Africa.</p> <p>The British official declined to say which allies had been involved in investigating the practice, but he suggested that their pilots had also been targets for recruitment.</p> <p>None of the pilots recruited by the Chinese operated the F-35, the most advanced and expensive fighter jet in the British fleet. But several have flown older-generation warplanes like the Typhoon, Harrier, Jaguar and Tornado, according to the official. Though the pilots train their Chinese counterparts on Chinese planes, he said, the Chinese were eager to learn about British and Western tactics and procedures.</p> <p>Relations between Britain and China <a href="#">have deteriorated sharply</a> in recent years, with the government in London denouncing Beijing’s crackdown on pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong, a former British colony. In July 2020, the government of Prime Minister Boris Johnson banned the purchase of equipment from Huawei, the Chinese telecommunications giant, for its high-speed broadband network on national security grounds.</p>



	<p>Under Mr. Johnson, China was designated as a “systemic competitor,” reflecting his government’s desire to balance criticism of Beijing’s human rights abuses with a continuation of trade relations. But the current prime minister, Liz Truss, has further hardened Britain’s stance. She is expected to designate China as a “threat” in an updated version of a defense and foreign policy review.</p> <p>After a lull in recruitment during the months of pandemic-related travel bans, the official said, China’s efforts to lure pilots have since ramped up.</p> <p>“All serving and former personnel are already subject to the Official Secrets Act,” the defense spokesman said, “and we are reviewing the use of confidentiality contracts and nondisclosure agreements across Defense, while <a href="#">the new national security bill</a> will create additional tools to tackle contemporary security challenges — including this one.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 Nigeria floods kill hundreds, displace 1.4M</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/17/world/africa/nigeria-floods.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/17/world/africa/nigeria-floods.html</a>
GIST	<p>Nigeria is suffering its worst flooding in a decade, with vast areas of farmland, infrastructure and 200,000 homes partly or wholly destroyed.</p> <p>Then there are the lives that have been lost.</p> <p>At least 603 people have died, more than 2,400 other people injured and over 1.4 million displaced. For some states, more than a month of floods is likely still to come.</p> <p>Residents of affected states carry their belongings up to the tops of their houses and get around by canoe on roads now deluged with water. Trucks full of food and fuel become stuck for days. In some areas, water levels are almost up to the eaves of the West African country’s distinctive pitched, painted metal roofs, making them appear to float. In other places, the tops of cars are just visible but the water around them ripples with raindrops, closing in fast.</p> <p>The rain is not the only factor.</p> <p>Every year, neighboring Cameroon — which runs along the length of Nigeria’s eastern border — releases water from a dam in northern Cameroon, causing flooding downstream in Nigeria. At the time of the dam’s construction, in the 1980s, the two countries <a href="#">agreed that a twin dam would be built</a> on the Nigerian side to contain the overflow. But the second one was never realized.</p> <p>Nigeria’s minister of humanitarian affairs, Sadiya Umar Farouq, blamed the scale of the disaster on the failure by branches of government other than her own to take action. “There was enough warning and information about the 2022 flood, but states, local governments and communities appear not to take heed,” the minister wrote on Twitter.</p> <p>Another critical factor is climate change.</p> <p>Matthias Schmale, the United Nations’ humanitarian coordinator for the country, <a href="#">said in a briefing last week</a> that this largely explains the extreme flooding.</p> <p>“Climate change is real, as we are yet again discovering in Nigeria,” he said.</p> <p>The phenomenon is <a href="#">causing ruin</a> across Africa, and as the continent is heavily dependent on agriculture, the effects are particularly devastating economically.</p> <p>Nigeria, which is by far Africa’s most populous country with more than 200 million people, lists in a national climate policy <a href="#">document</a> droughts, poor air quality, imperiled human health and habitat loss alongside floods as the effects of climate change.</p>

	<p><a href="#">A recent paper</a> on climate justice by the nonprofit Africa Center together with the Energy for Growth Hub, a Washington research institute, says almost all African countries have contributed “essentially nothing” to climate change. On the other hand, it says, the United States, the European Union, China, India and Russia are the big emitters of carbon, known to contribute to climate change. But despite pledges to help fund climate adaptation in Africa, rich nations have, so far, produced very few funds, <a href="#">high-level African officials say</a>.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 Officials: Russia winds down draft process</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/17/world/europe/russia-draft-quota.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/17/world/europe/russia-draft-quota.html</a>
GIST	<p>The mayor of Moscow announced the end of the draft on Monday for new recruits in his city, saying the Russian capital had fulfilled its quota just days after President Vladimir V. Putin had predicted that the call-up to bolster his flagging forces in Ukraine would end within the next two weeks.</p> <p>In addition to Moscow, authorities in more than 30 Russian regions have also said that they had fulfilled their draft quotas. It was unclear how many servicemen were sent to fight in Ukraine from Moscow and other big Russian cities, where there had been a strong resistance to the draft. The quota numbers were not publicly disclosed.</p> <p>In <a href="#">a statement</a> published on his website, the Moscow mayor, Sergei Sobyenin, said that draft offices would be closed by 2 p.m. on Monday and that all previously distributed summons notices would be canceled.</p> <p>Mr. Sobyenin said that the draft had presented “a huge challenge for thousands of families in Moscow, whose fathers, husbands, and sons join the acting army today.”</p> <p>Mr. Putin announced what he called a partial mobilization of troops on Sept. 21, <a href="#">prompting thousands of Russian men</a> to leave the country in panic. Defense officials had said Russia would aim to draft about 300,000 civilians.</p> <p>Last week Mr. Putin said that some 222,000 Russians had already been drafted, with 16,000 of these deployed to units involved in fighting in Ukraine. He also said that, despite widespread reports and rumors, no additional waves of mobilization were planned.</p> <p>The draft provoked widespread criticism across Russia, with people <a href="#">complaining</a> about chaotic bureaucracy and a lack of proper training, uniforms and equipment for the recruits. Russian news websites reported that some recruits had died only weeks after the mobilization was announced.</p> <p>Representatives of minority groups and residents of smaller towns and Russian ethnic republics also criticized the draft, saying that it had disproportionately affected them, in contrast to bigger cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 Russia uses Iran Shahed-136 drones</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/17/world/europe/russia-ukraine-iran-drones.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/17/world/europe/russia-ukraine-iran-drones.html</a>
GIST	<p>The latest Russian attack on the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, on Monday was preceded by a sound that has become increasingly familiar in the war: the buzz of a small engine, like a lawn-mower or moped, that signals the arrival of an exploding Iranian-made drone.</p> <p>Russia’s use of the devices, which first <a href="#">appeared in Ukraine</a> about two months ago, is considered to be a sign that it is running low on precision-guided weapons, analysts say. The drones have allowed Russia to strike energy infrastructure and civilian targets, even as it loses ground on the battlefield in the northeast and south of the country.</p>

Here's a look at what we know about the drones:

### **What is the Shahed-136 drone?**

Iran's Shahed-136 dives toward its target and explodes on impact. It has a triangular wing, carries a warhead of about 80 pounds and is launched from the back of a truck. The drones have a reported range of up to 1,500 miles, meaning they can be launched far from the front.

But they are also slow-moving, noisy and fly at a low altitude. Britain's Ministry of Defense [said last week](#) that those characteristics make them "easy to target using conventional air defenses."

While military experts agree that Ukraine's record of shooting down missiles has been good, Britain's Ministry of Defense added that there is "a realistic possibility that Russia has achieved some success" by attacking with several drones at the same time.

### **Why is Russia using Iranian-made drones?**

Russia failed to achieve air superiority during the war, and its manned aircraft face great risk when venturing into Ukrainian territory. The Shahed-136 drones can fly autonomously, circling in an area until its designated target appears. That gives Russia an option to attack without risk to its personnel. Although Iran has officially denied supplying Russia with the weapons, U.S. officials said that the first shipment was [delivered in August](#).

Russia may have asked a group of Iranian military instructors to train its troops in the use of the drones, the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War said a [recent assessment](#). Iran's drone inventory is under the control of the notorious Revolutionary Guard Corps, meaning that "IRGC or IRGC-affiliated personnel," could provide the training, the group said.

Ukraine, too, [has flown drones during the war](#), employing Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 drones, which fire missiles, to target Russian tanks and missile launchers. The United States has also [supplied Switchblade drones to Ukraine](#).

### **How powerful are the Iranian drones?**

The British military describes the Shahed-136's 80-pound payload as small. Still, its precision targeting gives it a potentially devastating effect. A Ukrainian officer [who saw the drone used in combat](#) said it could target a self-propelled howitzer near where the gunpowder was stored, causing a greater explosion than its warhead alone would achieve.

When the drones appeared on the battlefield in Ukraine this summer, they created a new risk to Kyiv's forces, which were far more accustomed to Russian artillery strikes. The Ukrainian military now says it has improved its ability to shoot down the drones, hitting a majority of them. A Ukrainian official [said last month that Israeli intelligence officials](#) were providing information about Iranian drones to Ukraine.

### **Where have they been used?**

The use of the drones was first confirmed on the battlefield in [August](#) in northeastern Ukraine, where Russian forces tested them against Ukrainian artillery and other heavy equipment. Ukrainian soldiers on the front lines around the eastern city of Bakhmut say they have been dealing with these drones in increasing numbers.

In recent days, use of the drones has also been reported deeper in Ukrainian territory, where Russia has been targeting civilian infrastructure. [At least six Iranian-made drones hit Bila Tserkva](#), a town about 50 miles south of Kyiv, on Thursday while another six were shot down by the Ukrainian military, officials said.

On Monday, the drones were employed in attacks on the capital itself, targeting the headquarters of Ukraine's national energy utility and also damaging residential buildings, Ukrainian officials said.

HEADLINE	10/17 Another Tacoma motel into apartments
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/business/real-estate-news/article267213232.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/business/real-estate-news/article267213232.html</a>
GIST	<p>The Motel 6 in Tacoma's South End is the latest in the South Hosmer Street area with plans to convert its rooms to apartments, according to plans filed this month with the city of Tacoma.</p> <p>The conversion of the two-story, 119-unit site at 1811 S. 76th St. is estimated to cost just under \$1 million. The project could start as soon as this month, according to the permit filing.</p> <p>The motel was built in the 1980s, with its last significant remodel in 2016, according to online records.</p> <p>County records show the property has had three different owners since 1999.</p> <p>The property last sold in July 2021 for \$5.8 million to a Sacramento-based investor, and another owner is on tap to take over soon.</p> <p>Developer Emily Hubbard with Sage Investments of Kirkland and Richland, told The News Tribune on Friday that Sage expects to complete its purchase in the next few weeks.</p> <p>The conversion follows a trend in the Hosmer Street area.</p> <p>The News Tribune reported in August that five former motels on South Hosmer Street have been sold since June of last year. Each is poised to transition into affordable housing as owners have struggled with crime on site and in the immediate vicinity.</p> <p>"We already own the Econo Lodge, which has had some challenges," Hubbard noted.</p> <p>She says the area is slowly improving as they work to convert that property, 8820 S. Hosmer St.</p> <p>"It's changed so much. The crime in that property is dramatically reduced in the last month and a half as we finally have gotten everything kind of figured out," Hubbard said. "And we've started remodeling and painting, and it looks completely different, which is so exciting."</p> <p>The Tacoma site isn't the only Motel 6 property Sage is involved with.</p> <p>"We'll also be closing on another property in Centralia that's a Motel 6, with a different owner," she added.</p> <p>Sage also is working on two hotel conversions in Fife: the former Travelodge at 3516 Pacific Highway E. and the Port of Tacoma Inn, 3501 Pacific Highway E.</p> <p>Rents at the former Tacoma Motel 6 site will range from \$900-\$1,200, "depending on the size of the unit," she said.</p> <p>As for the interior conversion, "We do white shaker cabinets, quartz countertops, full appliances and stainless steel. And there's a little quarter room divider for our studios to make it feel like there's a bedroom."</p> <p>The property will be fenced off with restricted access.</p> <p>"We run it off of an app so that way, as cars come and go, they have to be able to be approved by their guests, or they have to be approved guests or residents," she said.</p> <p>She noted that motel conversions are a good way to keep new housing coming at a time when lenders are skittish about construction loans amid economic uncertainty and a potential recession on the horizon.</p>

	<p>Such conversions can take up to 18 months once they gain ownership of a site, she noted, with construction taking between six-12 months.</p> <p>“I just hope that everyone kind of keeps the faith and knows that our goal is to turn it around,” she said.</p> <p><b>OTHER SITES CONVERTING TO APARTMENTS</b></p> <p>Many former budget brand hotel-motel properties nationwide are making the switch to apartments to help address the shortage of affordable housing, with Motel 6 among them.</p> <p>The owner of a former Motel 6 property in Ellensburg, Oregon, in September announced that site’s conversion to apartments.</p> <p>The state of California in April awarded \$10.8 million to convert a Motel 6 property in Costa Mesa to permanent supportive housing. It’s not always motels that have seen better years making the switch.</p> <p>Locally, at least one site of newly built apartments is now switching to “deeply affordable” units.</p> <p>Earlier this month, plans were announced that the Low Income Housing Institute of Seattle would buy the Heron Apartments, 1624 E. 32nd St. in Tacoma, to offer supportive and workforce housing.</p> <p>LIHI last year acquired the former Comfort Inn, 8620 S. Hosmer St., now Aspen Court, providing bridge housing for homeless singles and couples.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>10/17 Officials seek identities of 4 near wildfire</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/aggressively-moving-nakia-creek-fire-grows-rapidly-in-southwest-wa/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/aggressively-moving-nakia-creek-fire-grows-rapidly-in-southwest-wa/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Fire officials in Washington state are seeking information on people and a vehicle of interest as they investigate a wildfire that grew to 2,000 acres from 150 acres within hours Sunday, forcing thousands of people to evacuate.</p> <p>Authorities are trying to identify two men and two women who are believed to be connected with a white or light-colored Subaru seen on a ridge near the fire on Oct. 9, the Clark County fire marshal said in a statement Monday afternoon. The statement included a video and photo and cited witness statements, but it did not elaborate on the connection.</p> <p>The Nakia Creek fire is burning on extremely steep ground in the Yacolt Burn State Forest near Camas, Washington, about 20 miles northeast of Portland, Oregon. Officials said it was spread over 1,565 acres as of Monday afternoon and was 5% contained.</p> <p>The fire, which began Oct. 9, was about 20% contained earlier Sunday but exploded in size, driven by a combination of strong winds, high temperatures and low humidity, officials said. Nearly 3,000 homes were placed under mandatory evacuation orders in Clark County. Another 33,780 were under a voluntary evacuation notice.</p> <p>By Monday afternoon, the Clark County Sheriff’s Office had reopened some roads that had been closed. Some areas that had been declared evacuation zones were deemed safe Monday afternoon, authorities said.</p> <p>The wind, with gusts of up to 30 mph, was so strong at times that air response crews had to be grounded for their safety, the Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency said. There were also reports of other fires within Clark County and several in Skamania County, Clark County officials said. As of Monday, there were at least 51 notable fires burning across the Western United States, according to a New York Times database.</p>

Clark County officials said Sunday night that firefighters were preparing direct control lines along the flanks of the fire and reported that the fire was “smoldering and creeping with some torching” along the rocky terrain. “The potential for fire growth remains and containment lines are being put in place,” the county said.

The National Weather Service said winds were easing across the South Washington Cascades on Sunday night with an increase in humidity from marine air, which “should help” contain the Nakia fire.

Fire season in the region is typically over by October, Clark County said, but this season “has been a long one for fire crews.” Firefighters in Washington state are also tackling two other fires — the Loch Katrine fire, 13 miles northeast of North Bend, and the 8 Road fire, four miles north of Elbe.

“They have been putting in long days for several months now,” Clark County officials said.

Hilary Franz, the commissioner of public lands in Washington State, said on Twitter to expect increased smoke west of the Cascades on Monday. For those in smoky areas, she advised limiting the duration and intensity of outdoor activity, closing windows and doors in homes, and filtering indoor air through a filtration system.

The region has experienced unseasonably high temperatures in recent days. In Seattle, temperatures peaked at 88 degrees on Sunday, the second warmest day in October in almost 130 years of record, the weather service said. The conditions also made for a smoky baseball playoff game between the Seattle Mariners and Houston Astros.

The strong winds had another neighboring effect over the weekend: Easterly winds blew ash off the peak of Mount St. Helens.

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HEADLINE	10/17 Amid wildfires, rain finally on way to region
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/weather/rain-finally-on-way-to-seattle-cascade-mountains/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/weather/rain-finally-on-way-to-seattle-cascade-mountains/</a>
GIST	<p>After a weekend of heavy wildfire smoke, Seattle and the Cascade Mountains can expect some relief this week — in the form of rain.</p> <p>From Friday through Sunday, Seattle is likely to see more rain than it’s gotten over the last 3½ months combined, according to Dana Felton, meteorologist for the National Weather Service of Seattle. The region is expected to receive substantial rain Friday, followed by light showers Saturday and more heavy rain Sunday.</p> <p>“That’s gonna be the beginning of fall — finally,” Felton said Monday.</p> <p>Since July 4, Seattle has received four-tenths of an inch of rain. On Sunday, <a href="#">Seattle broke the record for the hottest temperature this late in the year</a>, reaching an official high of 88 degrees at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.</p> <p>Until the first large rain system moves into the region Friday, temperatures will remain unseasonably warm. But we won’t see temperatures in the 80-degree range like we did this past weekend. Highs will range from 65 to 70, Felton said.</p> <p>And until those big, glorious drops start falling from the sky, expect to see some haze and continued wildfire smoke.</p> <p>The <a href="#">Washington Smoke Blog</a> is reporting moderate levels on the air quality index for much of the region. Winds were moving east from the ocean Monday morning, which helped lessen and disperse some of the weekend’s heavy haze. But that wind was expected to cease by Monday evening, according to the Weather Service.</p>



MultiCare, a local nonprofit health care provider, has seen an increase in asthma-related diagnoses in its emergency departments across the Puget Sound region since early September, according to spokesperson Scott Thompson.

As of Monday evening, several fires in Washington were burning because of dry and windy conditions.

In the south Cascades, [the Nakia Creek fire](#) near Camas, Clark County, grew rapidly. Some 2,900 homes were under Level 3 (leave now) evacuation orders as of Sunday night.

Around 40,000 homes and businesses were under some form of evacuation notice as the fire grew from 156 acres Sunday morning to 1,565 acres overnight, according to Trina Contreras, spokesperson for the state Department of Natural Resources.

Officials on Monday updated evacuation zones, saying they were lessening them, but adding that the fire was still active and that things could again change.

The fire is only 5% contained, Contreras said Monday morning.

No structures have been damaged by the fire, and no injuries have been reported, Sharon Steriti, spokesperson for the Department of Natural Resources, told The Columbian.

“We just had some crazy gusty hot winds up there, and it took off,” said Contreras. To fight the much bigger blaze, a Type 2 team of forest firefighters — trained to fight larger fires — from Oregon arrived Monday to relieve the Type 3 team.

The Loch Katrine fire, 30 miles east of Seattle, had grown to an estimated 1,225 acres as of late Monday. Emery Johnson, public information officer for the team fighting the blaze, said firefighters were not able to contain more of it because conditions worsened so quickly. Johnson said they hoped to gain greater access to the affected area Monday and make a plan for starting containment lines.

Five crews and a dozen fire engines arrived Monday, Johnson said. Crews spent the day scouting for access points around the fire. The topography makes it difficult for crews to access the direct fire line, so they are working to improve roads and other areas to be able to put in containment lines.

The 8 Road fire, slightly north of Elbe in Pierce County, was estimated at 225 acres Monday evening. The fire, burning in the Elbe Hills State Forest, was reported around 4 p.m. Saturday.

The Bolt Creek fire, which has been burning since early September, was 41% contained Monday afternoon. A portion of Highway 2 near Skykomish was closed multiple times Sunday because of that fire. No delays or closures were expected Monday, unless debris entered the roadway, according to the [fire’s incident command webpage](#).

For the North and Central Cascades, people can expect to see around a half-inch of rain from 5-11 p.m. Friday alone. Saturday will likely see some light showers, with a second system moving in Sunday, and that could bring a half-inch of rain over 12 hours to the mountains, Felton said. Conditions will be windy as well over the weekend.

The rain in the Cascades will “definitely help the fires,” Felton said.

Seattleites can expect anywhere from three-tenths to close to half an inch of rain starting Friday afternoon and going into Saturday. Another tenth to two-tenths of an inch of rain is forecast for Sunday.

“This is what I would call a pattern breaker,” Felton said. “We’ll be kicking in the fall weather.”



HEADLINE	10/17 SEA airport building upward: 'inspansion'
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/sea-tac-airport-growing-expansion-projects/281-f5439bae-de7e-44ec-8fd5-0f7e99427b9f">https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/sea-tac-airport-growing-expansion-projects/281-f5439bae-de7e-44ec-8fd5-0f7e99427b9f</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — It's always a rush at the airport, from parking to getting through security. The <a href="#">Seattle-Tacoma International Airport</a> has grown exponentially when it comes to passengers.</p> <p>"It reflects the growth that's taking place in the region which is a good thing," said Managing Director of Aviation at the Port of Seattle Lance Lyttle.</p> <p>In the five years before the pandemic, passenger traffic increased by 43%, making it one of the fastest growing in the country.</p> <p>"The more passengers we have coming through the airport is actually the more economic opportunity that we're creating," said Lyttle.</p> <p>The issue is that the airport can't expand outward as it is up against three cities. Sitting at 2,500 acres, Sea-Tac is much smaller compared to other airports like Denver which has more than 33,000 acres.</p> <p>"Because we cannot go out, we're going up," said Lyttle who said they're calling it 'inspansion.' The FAA needs to sign off on any expansion upward.</p> <p>The newly opened International Arrivals Facility and the N. Concourse are finished examples of what the airport is looking to do more of, with future projects already in the works.</p> <p>"The major one that is probably the best example of 'inspansion' is C1 or C concourse expansion," said Lyttle. The renovation will add four floors between concourses C and D.</p> <p>There's also the South Satellite renovation still in the design phase.</p> <p>"That's probably going to be the biggest project in the history of the airport," said Lyttle.</p> <p>The Port of Seattle will have to work on half of the South Satellite Renovation at a time.</p> <p>"It takes a lot more time but we really have no choice because we need to keep the airport running while we're doing all of these construction projects," said Lyttle.</p> <p>Plus necessary projects like newly designed and opened bathrooms and restaurants are being added. It's been nonstop construction.</p> <p>"I feel like I'm running a construction company and I have a little airport on the side but at every airport I've ever worked, it's the same thing, airports are always under construction because we always have to replace and renew the existing facility and build new facilities. The construction never ends," said Lyttle.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/17 Western WA wildfires continue to rage
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/wildfire/wildfires-impacting-western-washington/281-1c9655fa-428e-4017-b662-c759bf1f0da8">https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/wildfire/wildfires-impacting-western-washington/281-1c9655fa-428e-4017-b662-c759bf1f0da8</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON, USA — A recent spell of <a href="#">dry and hot weather</a> in western Washington has allowed several wildfires to pop up, impacting thousands of acres of land and initiating closures of certain roadways.</p> <p>It's already the middle of October, but fires continue to rage throughout western Washington, including a couple of fires in Skagit County that have increased in size over the hot weekend. Fires are also burning in Snohomish County, King County, Clark County, Lewis County, Skamania County and Cowlitz County.</p>

### **Jim Creek Fire**

A brush fire that began Sunday in the Jim Creek Naval Recreation Area in Arlington has expanded and forced personnel and guests to be evacuated from the area.

Firefighters continue to fight the fire as of Monday afternoon, and it is active on neighboring Wheeler Mountain and Blue Mountain. No information on containment or additional evacuations is available, but the Washington Department of Natural Resources is involved along with a number of local agencies.

### **Bolt Creek Fire**

This human-caused fire began on Sep. 10 and has now burned 14,208 acres per InciWeb. The fire is 41% contained as of Monday afternoon.

US 2, which has been [opened and closed](#) in portions multiple times since the fire began, remains open but "may be subject to intermittent delays" if more debris falls onto the road.

The Baring and Index areas are under Level 1 Evacuation Guidance (Be Ready), although that level will be reviewed by fire managers as progress continues to be made on containment.

### **Nakia Creek Fire**

Burning in southwestern Washington near Camas, this fire has burned 1,565 acres and is 5% contained as of Monday afternoon. The fire began Sunday, Oct. 9, and is believed to be human-caused.

The Larch Corrections Center, located about 5 miles from the fire, evacuated inmates Monday as Level 3 (Go Now) evacuation notices went out to a number of homes. Below is the latest map of which areas are under which level of evacuation notice.

### **Suiattle River Fire**

This fire began on Aug. 30 and is believed to have been caused by lightning. The size of the fire is estimated at about 30 acres, and a Level 3 (Go Now) evacuation notice was issued Monday for the Lower Suiattle River Valley.

One resident expressed frustration with how long it's taking to combat the fire, but US Forest Service representatives said crews have been facing unfavorable conditions for getting more of a handle on the blaze.

"We've fought the fire, we've had people out there, we've been assessing management actions to take," said Jim Chu with the U.S. Forest Service. "More heat recently it's been hotter, drier and windier, so I think those factors resulted in the fire growth."

### **Goat Rocks Fire**

This fire southeast of Mt. Rainier is 5,765 acres and is 2% contained as of Monday afternoon. All areas north of Butter Creek are at Level 2 (Be Set) evacuation notices, which include Upper and Lower Timberline, Goat Rocks, River Dance, and parts of High Valley.

### **Murphy Lake Fire**

Burning about 2.5 miles southeast of Scenic in King County, this fire began from a lightning strike on Aug. 18 and has grown to 279 acres.

### **White River (& Irving Peak)**

Another fire believed to be caused by August lightning, the White River and Irving Peak are actively burning on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. The fire is 14,412 acres and is 10% contained as of Monday afternoon.

### **Siouxon Fire**

	<p>Believed to be caused by an abandoned campfire, the Siouxe Fire began on Sept. 22 in Skamania County. It has grown to 1,792 acres but is burning in steep, remote terrain and is not expected to escape the fire area.</p> <p><b>Kalama Fire</b></p> <p>The cause of this fire is still under investigation and began on Aug. 31 in Cowlitz County. It is 37% contained and stands at 493 acres. Firefighters believe it can be contained by the end of the month.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/17 Pierce Co. prepares voting software tests
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/politics/elections/pierce-county-test-voting-software/281-d6885ee3-a413-4c03-9aca-04becc805c4f">https://www.king5.com/article/news/politics/elections/pierce-county-test-voting-software/281-d6885ee3-a413-4c03-9aca-04becc805c4f</a>
GIST	<p>PIERCE COUNTY, Wash. — <a href="#">Pierce County Elections</a> will test their system's vote-counting software on Tuesday to verify that it's up-to-date and working properly.</p> <p>Pierce County Elections Supervisor Kyle Haugh said his team is excited to serve the county's 550,000 registered voters.</p> <p>"We're going to have a test deck that's been approved by the Secretary of State's office and we're going run that and make sure that scan matches our expected results," Haugh said.</p> <p>After the test deck has been processed through the tabulation equipment, a comparison is made between the pre-determined test deck results and the tabulator results to ensure that the "expected" vote counts match the actual vote counts.</p> <p>Election workers will also be verifying ballots using a specific standard, and if a ballot doesn't meet that standard, it won't be stored.</p> <p>"We don't just say, this ballot is good. The signature has to match, they had to have not voted, and it all has to be accounted for," Haugh explained. "In this state, if we report that we tabulated 100 ballots, we need to show in our registration system the 100 people who have credit for voting. If we don't, we have to report that anomaly to the general public, and the Secretary of State's office and explain why that anomaly occurred."</p> <p>Haugh said maintaining a closed system is vital for security, but it's also designed to be as transparent as possible.</p> <p>The election center's workspace is open to public viewing, complete with monitors set up in front of windows that allow people to watch the entire process.</p> <p>"If you're a member of the public and you want to just see what's going on, you can see what's going on through these windows," he said. "They're mirrored monitors, so you can always tell what we're working on at all times. Anytime we're open and we're processing ballots, our doors are unlocked at the front and people are able to come in and see what we're doing."</p> <p>Haugh said having this open approach is important to making sure people trust their elections, and hopes more people come to see the process in action.</p> <p>"We love educating our voters. This is a service you pay for, your elections and we want to make sure everyone feels confident in knowing how secure they are," Haugh said.</p> <p>Haugh said the same amount of dedication goes into every election Pierce County processes.</p> <p>"As soon as the primaries ended in August, we started preparing ballots for this election," he said. "It's a lot of groundwork, constantly, and when this election's certified, we're gonna turn around and start the</p>

	<p>February special elections for every school district and special taxing districts that decide they want to hold an election. The work never ends.”</p> <p>Haugh said since this is a midterm election, they’re anticipating a 65% turnout, which is around 350,000 ballots, but they’re prepared for more.</p> <p>This test is open to the public to watch and will happen here at the <a href="#">Pierce County Election Center</a> at 10 a.m. on Tuesday. Registered voters in Pierce County will be able to start submitting their ballots on Oct. 21 until Election Day on Nov. 8.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 North Bend water conservation ordinance</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/north-bend-issues-water-conservation-ordinance-after-region-experiences-driest-summer-decades/LL5JHAG3ONA77DCC3JX5LKTAT/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/north-bend-issues-water-conservation-ordinance-after-region-experiences-driest-summer-decades/LL5JHAG3ONA77DCC3JX5LKTAT/</a>
GIST	<p>NORTH BEND, Wash. — The lack of rain this summer has North Bend asking its residents to conserve water.</p> <p>Starting Thursday, the city is issuing a “stage two” water conservation ordinance that limits how often people can water their lawns or pastures.</p> <p>Residents’ water usage will be limited to three days a week and only between 6 a.m. and 10 a.m., when less evaporation occurs, according to North Bend Public Works.</p> <p>“Western Washington is now experiencing its driest summer on record, since 1930 and warmest since the 1890s,” a <a href="#">news release from the city</a> reads in part. “The prolonged period with no rain, along with an unseasonably hot September and October, have drawn the Masonry Pool lower at a faster pace than anticipated.”</p> <p>Customers with odd street addresses can irrigate on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, and customers with even street addresses can irrigate on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays.</p> <p>No residents will be allowed to water on Mondays.</p> <p>“The City appreciates residents’ efforts to comply with the WCO,” reads the news release. “Due to shorter days and longer, cooler nights, the City is confident the odd/even water schedule will provide sufficient water to sustain landscaping.”</p> <p>The ordinance will be in effect until further notice.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	<i>For more details on the water conservation ordinance, visit the <a href="#">city of North Bend's website</a>.</i>

HEADLINE	<b>10/17 Longer commutes coming: WSDOT adjusts</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/longer-commutes-are-coming-wsdot-adjusts-safety-measures-after-rise-in-work-zone-crashes">https://www.q13fox.com/news/longer-commutes-are-coming-wsdot-adjusts-safety-measures-after-rise-in-work-zone-crashes</a>
GIST	<p>KING COUNTY, Wash. - Drivers who thought your <a href="#">commute</a> was too long on interstates and highways throughout <a href="#">Washington</a>—your commute is about to get longer.</p> <p>Washington State Department of Transportation is reducing the amount of nighttime work zones and moving those construction projects to daytime hours. Officials said the change is an effort to protect workers from the increasing number of crashes at work zones.</p> <p>WSDOT said there were 1,232 crashes at work zones in the state in 2021. Officials said crews are at more risk than ever before, especially at night, because they’re seeing more drivers traveling at high speeds, distracted and impaired.</p>

	<p>"Our employees out on the work zones—they're spouses, parents, children, siblings and friends, and they all deserve to go home safe at the end of their shift," said Stefanie Randolph, a spokesperson for WSDOT.</p> <p>In March 2022, a driver <a href="#">barreled through a WSDOT work zone</a> and seriously hurt two contractors. Just this month, a driver crashed into a construction truck in WSDOT's Olympic Region.</p> <p>"And then we brought out another truck-mounted continuator to the same work zone, and it got hit in the same night. So we're seeing this increase, and we're looking to do whatever we can to keep our workers safe," said Randolph.</p> <p>Visibility is reduced driving in the dark as well as working in it. So, WSDOT is adjusting construction and safety measures to better protect workers.</p> <p>"Looking at extended daytime working hours, some different safety measures like portable rumble strips. We're reducing the number of times that our crews might be exposed to traffic—so, doing multiple repairs at a time to try to limit the amount of time that we're out there in a given work zone," said Randolph.</p> <p>The changes also include closing more lanes and longer work zone areas as a buffer. Randolph said this could create more congestion and longer travel times.</p> <p>"That's tough, because I don't want to be stuck in another hour of traffic, but you definitely want to be safe. But I definitely don't want to be in the car. Gas is really high," said Matthew Crews, who spends about two hours per day commuting.</p> <p>"The problem is getting there—you almost have to add an hour just to guess when you're going to get there," said Mr. DiLeonardo who commutes throughout the Seattle metro area for entertainment and sporting events.</p> <p>WSDOT said 61 workers have been killed since 1950, most of them while on the job at a work zone. Officials are asking people to slow down when passing construction projects and follow the signs posted. They're also asking for drivers to be patient in this new safety effort.</p> <p>The staff with Blessed by the Best food truck are already mapping out routes away from potential traffic jams to prevent interruptions with business.</p> <p>"We try to keep the locations close because of the traffic," said employee Lena Cernal.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	More information about the adjusted safety measures are available on the <a href="#">WSDOT Blog</a> .

HEADLINE	<b>10/17 Drones embody Iran-Russia alliance</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/17/world/europe/russia-iran-alliance-drones.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/17/world/europe/russia-iran-alliance-drones.html</a>
GIST	<p>The Iranian-made drones that Russia sent on Monday to <a href="#">divebomb Ukraine's capital</a> delivered the most emphatic proof yet that Tehran has become a rare, increasingly close ally to the Kremlin, offering both weapons and international support that Russia sorely lacks.</p> <p>There is no deep love between Russia, newly a pariah for attacking another country, and Iran, for decades one of the most strategically isolated nations in the world. But the two authoritarian governments, both chafing under Western sanctions, share a view of the United States as their great enemy and a threat to their grip on power.</p> <p>"This is a partnership of convenience between two embattled dictatorships," said Karim Sadjadpour, an Iran expert at the Washington-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.</p>

Both countries are deep in crisis, struggling economically and politically. Iran is attempting to [quell street protests](#) that pose the most serious challenge in years to the government, while Russia is trying to manage rising dissension over a [faltering war effort](#) and an unpopular draft.

The emergence of a Moscow-Tehran alliance has multiple international implications, potentially dimming prospects for a new agreement to rein in Iran's nuclear program and raising the pressure on Israel, Iran's sworn enemy, to take Ukraine's side in the war.

The relationship between Russia and Iran has been developing for years. President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia deployed his air force to Syria starting in 2015 to prevent the collapse of the regime of President Bashar al-Assad, a longtime ally of Tehran. Russia and Iran worked in lock step militarily, with Russian warplanes providing cover for Iranian militiamen and Iranian proxy forces fighting on the ground.

Syria was one example of the effort by both to find ways to sap American strength and prestige wherever they could in the world, and Ukraine provides a similar opportunity on an even larger, more visible scale.

After its 1979 revolution, Iran formulated foreign policy around the slogan "Neither East nor West," equally wary of the Soviet Union and the United States. Now, the Islamic Republic is choosing sides, analysts said, and images of Iran's exploding drones accurately hitting their targets advertise it as a regional power to be taken seriously.

In Tehran, the spokesman for the Iranian foreign ministry denied on Monday that his country was selling weapons to Russia, even as social media outlets linked to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which developed the [lumbering yet lethal drones](#), boasted about them.

"There is no doubt that the drones used by Russia's military are Iranian," said a post on Sepah Cyberi, a Telegram channel affiliated with the Guards, while the country's cyberarmy chief, Ali Akbar Raefipour, gloated on Twitter that Iran's Shahed drone was now "the most talked about weapon in the world."

Iran does not want to highlight the weapons sales because Ukraine is generally more popular than Russia among ordinary Iranians, and the Islamic Republic casts itself as a defender of underdogs in world affairs, said Mahmoud Shoori, deputy director of the Institute of Iran and Eurasia Studies in Tehran and an expert on Iran-Russia relations.

But at the same time, "Iran also wants to show the world that it has a military superpower as an ally and it has the capacity to sell weapons to such a power," he said in a telephone interview. "It shows the West's policies of maximum pressure to isolate Iran have not worked."

Aside from weapons, the two have found some common ground on energy, oil and gas. Russia has worked on Iran's Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant for decades, but extensive delays and multibillion-dollar cost overruns have turned it into a sore point in relations.

Russian forces have run low on precision-guided ballistic and cruise missiles, Western analysts say, and as a result, the war has reversed the usual pattern of major powers' selling arms to smaller ones. Unable to buy weapons elsewhere — except, perhaps, from North Korea — Moscow has turned to Iran.

The drones carry smaller payloads and are much slower than such missiles, making them far easier to shoot down. But they are also much cheaper, so Russia can launch them in bunches, overwhelming air defenses and allowing some to reach their targets.

"They can be used by Russia to target electricity, fuel, et cetera, and to attempt to economically exhaust Ukraine over time," said Michael Kofman, director of Russia studies at C.N.A., a defense research institute in Arlington, Va.

Iran or its proxies have been accused of using drones for attacks on adversaries in its own region, like Saudi Arabia.

For Iran, Russian use of its drones sends a message to its domestic audience, including those who have been protesting against restrictions on women's rights and personal freedom for weeks.

The government is trying to show Iranians that it is "not in a position of weakness, and has not been cowed by external pressure and threats," said Ali Vaez, the Iran project director for the International Crisis Group, an independent research institute.

The Washington Post reported on Sunday that Iran would also sell short-range ballistic missiles to Russia, weapons far more deadly than the drones. Analysts used to laugh off Iranian missiles as cheap knockoffs of Soviet or North Korean weapons, but no longer.

In recent years, Iran has made "lots of advances and has really improved their targeting ability," said Afshon Ostovar, an associate professor of Middle Eastern politics at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif.

It is not clear how Saudi Arabia, Iran's primary regional adversary, will react to the Kremlin's drawing closer to Tehran. The Saudi government and Moscow have joined forces recently in trying to raise oil prices, irking Washington and fueling inflation.

In Israel on Sunday, a cabinet minister, Nachman Shai, said on social media that Iran's military assistance to Russia removed "any doubt where Israel should stand in this bloody conflict. The time has come for Ukraine to receive military aid, as well, just as the U.S.A. and NATO countries provide."

The Israeli prime minister's office declined to comment.

Since the start of the war in February, Israel has not provided Ukraine with arms despite frequent Ukrainian requests for air-defense systems, and has been wary of criticizing Russia too strongly. Russia has given Israel a relatively free hand to strike Iranian targets in Syria, and the Israelis are also concerned about the Kremlin's obstructing Jewish emigration.

In a sign of brewing tensions, Dmitri A. Medvedev, a former president and now deputy head of Russia's Security Council, warned on social media Monday against any "reckless" supply of Israeli military aid to Ukraine. "It will destroy all interstate relations between our countries," wrote Mr. Medvedev.

The deepening alliance between Russia and Iran "should be seen as a profound threat and something that any country should pay very close attention to," said Vedant Patel, a deputy spokesman for the U.S. State Department, at a Monday news briefing. "We're in close touch with our allies and partners, including those in the United Nations, to address Iran's dangerous proliferation of weapons to Russia."

The European Union is closely monitoring the use of drones, said Josep Borrell Fontelles, its foreign policy chief. The bloc had already been weighing further action against Iran for its violent crackdown against domestic dissent in recent weeks. Ukraine on Monday called for further sanctions.

The drone sales provoked more questions about the prospects for a nuclear deal under which Western sanctions against Iran would be lifted in exchange for Tehran's greatly reducing its capacity to enrich the uranium needed for nuclear weapons. President Donald J. Trump withdrew from the original 2015 pact, which included Russia and other world powers, and President Biden has been keen to negotiate a new one.

The Russians are now seen as perhaps the least enthusiastic about the deal as it would return significant amounts of Iranian oil and gas to the international market, competing with Russia's own sales and potentially driving down prices. Nor is it clear how willing Iran's ruling mullahs would be to return to accepting limits on their nuclear program.



	<p>Mr. Putin made a rare overseas trip last July in order to cement the alliance with Iran as a counterweight to being isolated from the West. Since then, the challenges facing both his and Iran's governments have grown significantly.</p> <p>"In their view, the West is either irreconcilably hostile or unreliable," Mr. Vaez said of Iran. "I think in this conflict in Ukraine, they see an opportunity for consolidating the relationship with the East as a way of trying to neutralize the pressure they face from the West, be it economic, military or political."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Russia targets Ukraine power, water</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russian-suicide-drones-strike-terror-ukraine-us-warns-war-crimes-2022-10-18/">https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russian-suicide-drones-strike-terror-ukraine-us-warns-war-crimes-2022-10-18/</a>
GIST	<p>KYIV/MYKOLAIV, Ukraine, Oct 18 (Reuters) - Ukraine said Russia had destroyed almost a third of its power stations over the past week as Moscow stepped up a pre-winter campaign to strike infrastructure, a move the West says is a calculated attempt to disrupt and demoralise.</p> <p>Missiles struck power generating facilities in a clutch of Ukrainian cities home to millions of people and several people were killed. Moscow acknowledged targeting energy plants, while Ukraine said water infrastructure had also been hit.</p> <p>"The situation is critical now across the country ... the whole country needs to prepare for electricity, water and heating outages," Kyrylo Tymoshenko, deputy head of the Ukrainian president's office, told Ukrainian television.</p> <p>At least one man died when a Russian missile reduced his apartment in the southern river port of Mykolaiv to rubble.</p> <p>"They (Russians) probably get pleasure from this," said Oleksandr, the owner of a local flower shop damaged in the attack. "They get pleasure from us feeling bad. I think they want us to bomb and shell (their) city buildings. But we won't do that to be different from them."</p> <p>Another two people were reported killed in a strike on Kyiv.</p> <p>Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Russia was continuing to try to terrorise and kill civilians. "Since Oct 10, 30% of Ukraine's power stations have been destroyed, causing massive blackouts across the country," he wrote on Twitter.</p> <p>Power cuts were reported in parts of Kyiv, many parts of the Zhytomyr region west of the capital and Dnipro, which, like Mykolaiv, is in the south but also far from the front line where Ukraine is pressing Russian forces occupying its southeast.</p> <p>Zelenskiy reiterated his refusal to negotiate with Russian President Vladimir Putin whom he has accused of immorality.</p> <p>"The terrorist state will not change anything for itself with such actions," he wrote on the Telegram messaging app. "It will only confirm its destructive and murderous essence, for which it will certainly be held to account."</p> <p>Putin has dismissed Zelenskiy as a puppet of Washington, which has given Kyiv more than \$17.5 billion in security aid.</p> <p>There was no immediate word on how many people had been killed in Tuesday's strikes overall, which came a day after Russia sent swarms of drones to attack infrastructure in Kyiv and other cities, killing at least five people.</p>

Moscow denies deliberately targeting civilians, though it has pummelled villages, towns and cities across Ukraine during what it calls a "special military operation" needed to ensure its security against NATO by rooting out anti-Russian elements.

The Russian defence ministry, whose troops have this month been forced to retreat on two separate fronts, reiterated that it was carrying out attacks on military targets and energy infrastructure across Ukraine with high-precision weapons.

It has deployed both missiles and drones.

#### DESTRUCTION

The mayor of Zhytomyr, a city of 263,000 people, said Tuesday's attacks had knocked out the power and water supply, while two explosions rocked an energy facility in the city of Dnipro, a city of nearly 1 million, causing serious damage, according to Tymoshenko, the Ukrainian presidential aide.

A Reuters witness heard blasts and saw smoke rising in Kyiv, the capital. The Kyiv City Prosecutor's office said two people had been killed and one wounded in a Russian missile strike on an energy supply facility there.

There were reports too of power facilities being targeted in Kharkiv, a city with a pre-war population of 1.43 million people close to the Russian border, as well as in Zelenskiy's home town of Kryvyi Rih.

In Mykolaiv, a strategic port which Russia tried and failed to capture earlier in the war, a Reuters witness said they had heard three explosions in the early hours of Tuesday.

A missile had completely destroyed one wing of a building in the downtown area, leaving a massive crater, they said. A fire crew was seen pulling the dead body of a man from the rubble.

"In Mykolaiv, the enemy destroyed a residential building with S-300 missiles. A person died. There was also a strike at the flower market, the chestnut park. I wonder what the Russian terrorists were fighting against at these absolutely peaceful facilities?" Zelenskiy said.

The governors of Russia's Kursk and Belgorod regions, which border Ukraine, on Tuesday reported cross-border shelling.

In Belgorod, a train station was shelled and train links suspended, and two villages were shelled in Kursk, leading to electricity outages, they said.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 Home prices slashed at record pace</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://nypost.com/2022/10/17/home-asking-prices-tumble-at-record-pace-as-mortgage-rates-surge/">https://nypost.com/2022/10/17/home-asking-prices-tumble-at-record-pace-as-mortgage-rates-surge/</a>
GIST	<p>Home sellers are slashing their asking prices at a record clip <a href="#">as surging mortgage rates</a> drive a downturn in the US housing market, according to a recent report from real estate firm Redfin.</p> <p>About 7.9% of home listings reported price drops during the four-week period ending Oct. 9, according to a rolling average <a href="#">compiled by Redfin</a>. That figure marked a record high and a significant uptick compared to the same period last year, when just 4% of listings reported price cuts.</p> <p>“Prospective homebuyers and sellers barely had time to get used to 5.5% mortgage rates over the summer before they rose to nearly 7% this month,” said Redfin Deputy Chief Economist Taylor Marr.</p> <p>“The second sharp rate increase this year, together with nerves about inflation and the direction of the economy, is dragging home-sale activity down further than it was over the summer and pushing homebuyer sentiment down near its all-time low,” Marr added.</p>

Buying activity in the once red-hot US housing market has considerably slowed as higher mortgage rates make it more difficult to afford homes. A 30-year fixed-rate mortgage averaged 6.92% last week – more than double the rate for the same week one year earlier, according to Freddie Mac.

Based on the current median home asking price and the 6.92% average long-term mortgage rate, buyers face a record-high monthly mortgage payment of \$2,559, Redfin's calculations showed.

Mortgage payments are 51% more expensive than they were at this time last year, when buyers could expect to pay \$1,698 per month on a 3.05% mortgage rate.

The number of pending home sales is down 28% compared to last year – the sharpest rate of decline since the thick of the COVID-19 pandemic in May 2020.

The median asking price of newly listed homes is down 1% over the last four weeks, though it is still up 9% to \$379,725 over the last year.

Redfin generated its report based on data derived from more than 400 US metro areas.

Mortgage rates have surged as the Federal Reserve raises its benchmark interest rate to combat inflation. While mortgage rates aren't directly influenced by the Fed's benchmark, they tend to move higher as the central bank tightens monetary policy.

[As The Post reported](#), home prices have begun to sharply decline in some markets.

The median US home price fell 0.77% from June to July, according to Black Knight's July Mortgage Monitor report. That figure was the largest month-over-month [decline in home values](#) since January 2011.

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HEADLINE	10/18 Soaring US dollar spreads pain worldwide
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/inflation-middle-east-africa-business-global-trade-bee68344b1812dd48ca9c0735395b868?utm_source=homepage&amp;utm_medium=TopNews&amp;utm_campaign=pos">https://apnews.com/article/inflation-middle-east-africa-business-global-trade-bee68344b1812dd48ca9c0735395b868?utm_source=homepage&amp;utm_medium=TopNews&amp;utm_campaign=pos</a> <a href="#">ition 08</a>
GIST	<p>The <a href="#">cost of living in Cairo</a> has soared so much that security guard Mustafa Gamal had to send his wife and year-old daughter to live with his parents in a village 70 miles south of the Egyptian capital to save money. Gamal, 28, stayed behind, working two jobs, sharing an apartment with other young people and eliminating meat from his diet. "The prices of everything have been doubled," he said. "There was no alternative."</p> <p>Around the world, people are sharing Gamal's pain and frustration. An auto parts dealer in Nairobi, a seller of baby clothes in Istanbul and a wine importer in Manchester, England, have the same complaint: <a href="#">A surging U.S. dollar</a> makes their local currencies weaker, contributing to skyrocketing prices for everyday goods and services. This is compounding financial distress at a time when families are already facing <a href="#">food</a> and <a href="#">energy crunches</a> tied to <a href="#">Russia's invasion of Ukraine</a>.</p> <p>"A strong dollar makes a bad situation worse in the rest of the world," says Eswar Prasad, a professor of trade policy at Cornell University. Many economists worry that the sharp rise of the dollar is increasing the <a href="#">likelihood of a global recession</a> sometime next year.</p> <p>The dollar is up 18% this year and last month hit a 20-year high, according to the benchmark ICE U.S. Dollar Index, which measures the dollar against a basket of key currencies.</p> <p>The reasons for the dollar's rise are no mystery. To combat <a href="#">soaring U.S. inflation</a>, the Federal Reserve has raised its benchmark short-term interest rate five times this year and is signaling <a href="#">more hikes are likely</a>.</p>

That has led to higher rates on a wide range of U.S. government and corporate bonds, luring investors and driving up the U.S. currency.

Most other currencies are much weaker by comparison, especially in poor countries. The Indian rupee has dropped nearly 10% this year against the dollar, the Egyptian pound 20%, the Turkish lira an astounding 28%.

Celal Kaleli, 60, sells infant clothing and diaper bags in Istanbul. Because he needs more lira to buy imported zippers and liners priced in dollars, he has to raise prices for the Turkish customers who struggle to pay him in the [much-diminished local currency](#).

“We’re waiting for the new year,” he said. “We’ll look into our finances, and we’ll downsize accordingly. There’s nothing else we can do.”

Rich countries aren’t immune. In Europe, which was already [teetering toward recession amid soaring energy prices](#), one euro is worth less than a \$1 for the first time in 20 years, and the [British pound has plunged 18%](#) from a year ago. The pound recently flirted with dollar parity after Britain’s new prime minister, Liz Truss, announced huge tax cuts that roiled financial markets and led to the [ouster of her Treasury secretary](#).

Ordinarily, countries could get some benefit from falling currencies because it makes their products cheaper and more competitive overseas. But at the moment, any gain from higher exports is muted because economic growth is sputtering almost everywhere.

A rising dollar is causing pain overseas in a number of ways:

- It makes other countries’ imports more expensive, adding to existing inflationary pressures.
- It squeezes companies, consumers and governments that borrowed in dollars. That’s because more local currency is needed to convert into dollars when making loan payments.
- It forces [central banks in other countries to raise interest rates](#) to try and prop up their currencies and keep money from fleeing their borders. But those higher rates also weaken economic growth and drive up unemployment.

Put simply: “The dollar’s appreciation is bad news for the global economy,” says Capital Economics’ Ariane Curtis. “It is another reason why we expect the global economy to fall into recession next year.”

In a gritty neighborhood of Nairobi known for fixing cars and selling auto parts, businesses are struggling and customers unhappy. With the Kenyan shilling down 6% this year, the cost of fuel and imported spare parts is soaring so much that some people are choosing to ditch their cars and take public transportation.

“This has been the worst,” said Michael Gachie, purchasing manager with Shamas Auto Parts. “Customers are complaining a lot.”

Gyrating currencies have caused economic pain around the world many times before. During the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s, for instance, Indonesian companies borrowed heavily in dollars during boom times — then were wiped out when the Indonesian rupiah crashed against the dollar. A few years earlier, a plunging peso delivered similar pain to Mexican businesses and consumers.

The soaring dollar in 2022 is uniquely painful, however. It is adding to global inflationary pressures at a time when prices were already soaring. Disruptions to energy and [agriculture markets](#) caused by the Ukraine war magnified supply constraints stemming from the COVID-19 recession and recovery.

In Manila, Raymond Manaog, 29, who drives the colorful Philippine mini-bus known as a jeepney, complains that inflation — and especially the [rising price of diesel](#) — is forcing him to work more to get by.

	<p>“What we have to do to earn enough for our daily expenses,” he said. “If before we traveled our routes five times, now we do it six times.”</p> <p>In the Indian capital New Delhi, Ravindra Mehta has thrived for decades as a broker for American almond and pistachio exporters. But a record drop in the rupee — on top of higher raw material and shipping costs — has made the nuts much costlier for Indian consumers.</p> <p>In August, India imported 400 containers of almonds, down from 1,250 containers a year earlier, Mehta said.</p> <p>“If the consumer is not buying, it affects the entire supply chain, including people like me,” he said.</p> <p>Kingsland Drinks, one of the United Kingdom’s biggest wine bottlers, was already <a href="#">getting squeezed by higher costs</a> for shipping containers, bottles, caps and energy. Now, the <a href="#">rocketing dollar is driving up the price</a> of the wine it buys from vineyards in the United States — and even from Chile and Argentina, which like many countries rely on the dollar for global trade.</p> <p>Kingsland has offset some of its currency costs by taking out contracts to buy dollars at a fixed price. But at some point, “those hedges run out and you have to reflect the reality of a weaker sterling against the U.S. dollar,” said Ed Baker, the company’s managing director.</p> <p>Translation: Soon customers will just have to pay more for their wine.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 Russia pushing Belarus to brink of war?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thedailybeast.com/panic-as-vladimir-putin-drags-belarus-to-the-brink-of-russias-war-on-ukraine?ref=home">https://www.thedailybeast.com/panic-as-vladimir-putin-drags-belarus-to-the-brink-of-russias-war-on-ukraine?ref=home</a>
GIST	<p>Russia is sending as many as 9,000 servicemen and hundreds of armored vehicles to <a href="#">Belarus</a>, the Belarusian Defense Ministry said Monday. According to the ministry, Belarusian forces are set to conduct live fire exercises and anti-aircraft guided missile launches with the Russians.</p> <p>It is the latest sign that Belarus, which <a href="#">Russian President Vladimir Putin</a> has used as a staging ground for <a href="#">the war in Ukraine</a>, may be preparing its armed forces for more action.</p> <p>Belarusian leader <a href="#">Alexander Lukashenko</a> said earlier this month he agreed with Putin that there should be a <a href="#">joint regional group</a> of troops “in connection with the aggravation on the western borders of the Union State,” referring to the <a href="#">“union state” between Russia and Belarus</a> that fuses the countries’ militaries, banking, and other sectors.</p> <p>According to a briefing with military attaches, Russia will send Belarus approximately “170 tanks, up to 200 armored combat vehicles, and up to 100 guns and mortars with a caliber of more than 100 mm,” the head of the Department of International Military Cooperation of the Ministry of Defense Belarus, Valery Revenko, said.</p> <p>Aviation components and troops have already begun to arrive, Revenko said. Belarus’ Armed Forces have also undergone a “sudden inspection of the combat readiness” this month, he added.</p> <p>The exercises come as Ukraine warns that Belarus may make an attempt to <a href="#">attack Ukraine from the north</a>, Ukraine Security Service (SBU) Colonel Roman Kostenko said earlier this month.</p> <p>Belarus has long been supportive of Russia’s war in Ukraine, serving as the launching pad for Russia’s effort to seize Kyiv early this year. Although the offensive failed, Belarus has been ginning up its military in light of the war for months. In June, <a href="#">Belarus announced the creation of a people’s militia</a>, a new military unit on the southern border with Ukraine, and drills.</p>

Lukashenko has in recent weeks accused other European countries of acting “provocatively” and has also zeroed in on Poland—threatening a [forceful response](#) if anything goes awry on its border with the country.

At the same time, the Belarusian president has made calls for peace, suggesting that he is against war, even while allowing Putin to use Belarus for his war plans. Belarus’ Ministry of Defense has claimed that proposals of peace have not been accepted, forcing Belarus to resort to deployment.

“In the current conditions of the military-political situation, most of the proposals of the MoD of Belarus on the need for dialogue and de-escalation of tension under various pretexts were not accepted. Result is the deployment,” Revenko said.

Putin is probably working to lean on Lukashenko after a series of losses in Ukraine, Kenneth Yalowitz, a former U.S. ambassador to Belarus, told The Daily Beast.

“Putin is probably pressing him very strongly,” Yalowitz said.

Putin may be hoping that if Belarus appears to be building up for potential deployment, Ukraine will have to divert some resources to defend against a potential northern incursion, taking focus away from the fight against the Russians in the south and giving the Russians an edge.

“By developing this force on the border between Belarus and Ukraine... what Putin is driving at is to force, you know, Ukrainian forces, to defend that part of the border,” Yalowitz told The Daily Beast. “This is more of psychological warfare... to show that Putin is not defenseless, but that he still has options... even though the war is going poorly.”

Belarusian Defense Minister Viktor Khrenin expanded on the Belarusian and Russian grouping in a meeting at a tractor factory on Monday, noting that Belarus is practicing for deployment.

The grouping includes “command and control bodies of various levels” as well as army units and support units, according to Khrenin.

“We have practiced various options for deploying and using the regional force grouping,” [Khrenin said](#). “We have practiced deploying all the systems in the face of an obvious threat and the gradual deployment in accordance with the situation. Taking into account the evolving situation, we are gradually implementing individual measures meant to prepare the regional force grouping for responding to emerging challenges and threats.”

The influx of Russian forces into Belarus is stirring rumors of mobilization and striking fear throughout the country, as the domestic population is unlikely to support a broad mobilization. One Belarusian mother, who spoke with RFERL under a pseudonym to protect her safety, said she has instructed her son, who is deployed near the Ukrainian border, to run.

“You just need to not go to the military office and hide the children,” the mother said, “so they're not going to fight for other people's interests.”

Others are examining ways to avoid conscription should Lukashenko order a broader mobilization, especially after Belarusian lawmakers have been [eyeing canceling draft deferments](#) for students studying abroad.

Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya has warned that if Lukashenko moves forward with a mobilization, he would face significant [domestic pushback](#).

Lukashenko has worked to toe the line, and has sworn that his involvement in the conflict is just to help Russians and Ukrainians and that he does not intend for Belarus to get involved in the war directly.



	<p>The Belarusian Defense Minister echoed his stance, claiming that the group exercises were only about defense, not offense.</p> <p>“We are not going to attack anyone. I'd like to emphasize once again that this force grouping is supposed to carry out purely defensive tasks,” Khrenin said, adding that it was meant to be an “adequate response” to what is going on on Belarusian borders.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/17 OTC hearing aids in US for first time
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Health/counter-hearing-aids-us-1st-time/story?id=91611538">https://abcnews.go.com/Health/counter-hearing-aids-us-1st-time/story?id=91611538</a>
GIST	<p>For the first time, hearing aids are available for purchase over the counter at retailers across the United States.</p> <p>Starting Monday, under a <a href="#">historic ruling</a> issued by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, adults with mild-to-moderate hearing loss can buy hearing aids at a store or online without a prescription, medical exam or audiologist fitting -- and for thousands of dollars less than they previously cost, according to the White House.</p> <p>The FDA estimates the new rule could lower average costs for hearing aids by as much as \$3,000 per pair, the White House said. Consumers are expected to save about \$1,400 per individual hearing aid, or over \$2,800 per pair.</p> <p>"A person's 'whole health' is a combination of many factors, including hearing, that influence physical and mental well-being," Walmart's chief medical officer, Dr. John Wigneswaran, said in a statement Monday. "Offering easy access to OTC hearing aids -- something that seems quite small -- is a solution that can improve our customer's health outcomes and their ability to live better and healthier."</p> <p>Walgreens is now selling hearing aids at stores nationwide and online for \$799 per pair. Walmart is also offering an assortment of over-the-counter hearing aids -- ranging in price from \$199 to \$999 per pair -- on Walmart.com, SamsClub.com and in over 1,000 Vision Centers in Walmart stores across Colorado, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Texas, as well as 474 Sam's Club Hearing Aid Center locations. CVS is now selling over-the-counter hearing aids online, with varying options on model and price point. The company will also offer hearing aids in select CVS Pharmacy locations beginning in November, according to the White House.</p> <p>Best Buy will offer nearly 20 different hearing devices online starting this week. By the end of the month, the company will offer hearing aids in nearly 300 stores across the country. Devices will range in price between \$200 and \$3,000. Hy-Vee will sell over-the-counter hearing aids online and in 34 locations across Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, and Wisconsin starting this week. The company plans to offer hearing aids in 100 locations by the end of the year. There will be four different models ranging in price from \$499.99 to \$999.99, according to the White House.</p> <p>The FDA announced the move back in August, issuing a final ruling that established a new category of over-the-counter hearing aids to improve access and, in turn, lower costs for millions of Americans. The ruling followed an executive order from President Joe Biden in 2021 that called for the FDA to take steps to allow hearing aids to be sold over the counter.</p> <p>"The new over-the-counter category applies to certain air conduction hearing aids, intended for adults aged 18 and older who have perceived mild-to-moderate hearing loss," Dr. Jeffrey Shuren, director of the FDA's Center for Devices and Radiological Health, said at a briefing on Aug. 16. "Hearing aids for severe hearing loss or for users younger than age 18 will be prescription devices, to assure patient safety as well as effectiveness."</p>



	<p>Air conduction hearing aids are worn inside the ear or on the ear, with an inside-the-ear component and amplified sound into the ear canal. In an effort to prevent further hearing loss, these devices will have sound limits, the FDA said.</p> <p>Nearly 30 million Americans suffer from some degree of hearing loss, including nearly 10 million adults under the age of 60, according to the White House.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 Monkeypox cases fall lowest level since Jun</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Health/monkeypox-cases-us-fall-hit-lowest-level-june/story?id=91620724">https://abcnews.go.com/Health/monkeypox-cases-us-fall-hit-lowest-level-june/story?id=91620724</a>
GIST	<p>Monkeypox cases are <a href="#">continuing to decline</a> in the United States as the outbreak keeps showing signs of receding.</p> <p>As of Oct. 12, the U.S. recorded a seven-day average of 60 cases, according to the <a href="#">Centers for Disease Control and Prevention</a>.</p> <p>This is the lowest average recorded since June 29, which is right around the time that infections began climbing. It's also down from the seven-day average of 443 cases recorded in early August, <a href="#">CDC data</a> shows.</p> <p>Trends seen in cities across the country mirror those nationwide.</p> <p>In New York City -- the epicenter of the outbreak -- the seven-day average has fallen to 2 as of Oct. 11 from the city's <a href="#">Department of Health &amp; Mental Hygiene</a>. This is a sharp decline from the peak of 73 recorded in late July and early August.</p> <p>Similarly, in Los Angeles, the seven-day average sits at 5 as of most recent data from Oct. 3, according to the <a href="#">Los Angeles County Department of Public Health</a> shows, which is the lowest since early July. It's also a marked drop from the peak of 41 in late August.</p> <p>Dr. Shira Doron, an infectious disease physician and hospital epidemiologist at Tufts Medical Center in Boston, told ABC News the outbreak has fallen for a few reasons, one being behavioral changes.</p> <p>The outbreak has primarily been concentrated in men who have sex with men, a group that includes people who identify as gay, bisexual, transgender and nonbinary, although health officials have said anyone -- regardless of sexual orientation -- is at risk if they have direct contact with an infected person.</p> <p><a href="#">Surveys</a> have shown that high-risk groups listened to public health advice and made changes such as reducing the number of sexual partners and anonymous sexual encounters.</p> <p>"There were really substantial changes among men who have sex men," Doron said. "High proportions said that they had made significant changes in their behavior."</p> <p>Another reason, she said, is vaccines. As of Oct. 11, more than 906,000 doses of the JYNNEOS vaccine -- the only vaccine approved by the Food and Drug Administration to prevent smallpox and monkeypox disease -- have been administered across the U.S., according to the CDC.</p> <p>To increase the number of JYNNEOS doses available, the FDA authorized a new strategy in August to inject the vaccine intradermally, just below the first layer of skin, rather than subcutaneously, or under all the layers of skin, allowing one vial of vaccine to be given out as five separate doses rather than a single dose.</p> <p>Doron, however, said it's too soon to claim victory over the outbreak and added that it's important for those who are at high-risk to keep taking precautions.</p>

	<p>"As we have learned and seen with COVID, case numbers have a certain shape and what goes down can come up again," she said. "So, we can't rest on our laurels and think that's it over."</p> <p>"The public can relax to a much greater extent than public health officials and hospital officials," she added.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Ukraine faces brutal winter season ahead</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/winter-coming-ukrainians-dig-brutal-season-ahead-91661669">https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/winter-coming-ukrainians-dig-brutal-season-ahead-91661669</a>
GIST	<p>KIVSHARIVKA, Ukraine -- Nine-year-old Artem Panchenko helps his grandmother stoke a smoky fire in a makeshift outdoor kitchen beside their nearly abandoned apartment block. The light is falling fast and they need to eat before the setting sun plunges their home into cold and darkness.</p> <p>Winter is coming. They can feel it in their bones as temperatures drop below freezing. And like tens of thousands of other Ukrainians, they are facing a season that promises to be brutal.</p> <p>Artem and his grandmother have been living without gas, water or electricity for around three weeks, ever since Russian missile strikes cut off the utilities in their town in Ukraine's eastern Kharkiv region. For them and the few other residents that remain in the complex in Kivsharivka, bundling up at night and cooking outdoors is the only way to survive.</p> <p>"It's cold and there are bombings," Artem said Sunday as he helped his grandmother with the cooking. "It's really cold. I'm sleeping in my clothes in our apartment."</p> <p>More Russian strikes on Monday and Tuesday in Kyiv, the capital, and several other Ukrainian cities by drones and missiles that targeted power plants have added to the general sense of foreboding about the coming winter.</p> <p>As the freeze sets in, those who haven't fled from the heavy fighting, regular shelling and months of Russian occupation in eastern Ukraine are desperately trying to figure out how to dig in for the cold months.</p> <p>In the nearby village of Kurylivka, Viktor Palyanitsa pushes a wheelbarrow full of freshly cut logs along the road toward his house. He passes a destroyed tank, the remnants of damaged buildings and the site of a 300-year-old wooden church that was leveled as Ukrainian forces fought to liberate the area from Russian occupiers.</p> <p>Palyanitsa, 37, said he's gathered enough wood to last the entire winter. Still, he planned to begin sleeping beside a wood-burning stove in a rickety outbuilding and not his home, since all the windows in his house have been blown out by flying shrapnel.</p> <p>"It's not comfortable. We spend a lot of time on gathering wood. You can see the situation we're living in," Palyanitsa said, quietly understating the dire outlook for the next several months.</p> <p>Authorities are working to gradually restore electricity to the area in the coming days, and repairs to water and gas infrastructure will come next, according to Roman Semenukha, a deputy with the Kharkiv regional government.</p> <p>"Only after that will we be able to begin to restore heating," he said.</p> <p>Authorities were working to provide firewood to residents, he added, but had no timeline for when the utilities would be restored.</p>

Standing beside his pile of split wood, Palyanitsa was not waiting for government help. He said he didn't expect heating to be restored anytime soon, but that he feels ready to fend for himself even once winter sets in.

"I have arms and legs. So I'm not scared of the cold, because I can find wood and heat the stove," he said.

Authorities in the Ukrainian-controlled areas of the neighboring, hotly contested Donetsk region have urged all remaining residents to evacuate, and warned that gas and water services in many areas will likely not be restored by winter. Like in the Kharkiv region, ordinary Ukrainians are still living in thousands of homes that have been wrecked by Russian strikes, with leaky or damaged roofs and blown-out windows that are unable to provide protection against cold or wet weather.

The threat of a winter without heating has even spread to other areas of Ukraine far from the front lines.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, angered and embarrassed by a Ukrainian strike on a key bridge to annexed Crimea, has intensified Russia's bombing campaign, targeting civilian energy infrastructure around Ukraine and leaving many cities and towns without electricity. Monday's strikes hit Kyiv, Sumy in the northeast and Vinnytsia in western Ukraine.

In the center of Kurylivka, a group of men used a chainsaw to bring down a tree near a bus stop. As they worked, they warned an Associated Press reporter about the Russian land mines still hidden in the surrounding grass.

With so much of the area's towns destroyed and modern comforts all but disappeared, the drive for survival trumps any concerns about the preservation of what was before. With no utilities, homes have become like rudimentary shelters from a medieval age where residents live by candlelight, gather water from wells and bundle up to fend off the cold.

Artem's grandmother, Iryna Panchenko, said she and her grandson have been sleeping in an abandoned apartment next door since all their windows were blown out by a Russian strike.

"After the first explosion wave, we lost one window and two were damaged. After the second explosion, all the other windows were destroyed," she said. "It's very cold living here. It's hard to cook, it's hard to run between the apartment and where we cook. My legs hurt."

Makeshift lean-to structures dot the overgrown courtyards of their apartment complex where residents gather to cook over fires. One woman collected scraps of wood from a ground-floor apartment that was caved in by a Russian rocket strike. Another resident joked that his home had become a five-room apartment after one of its exterior walls collapsed.

Anton Sevrukov, 47, toasted bread and heated a kettle of water over a fire to bring up tea to his disabled mother.

"No electricity, no water, no gas. We are cold," he said. "I'm making tea for my mother on the fire but she only drinks a little bit to warm up for a short time."

In the darkness of his cramped, musty apartment, Sevrukov's mother sat under a blanket on a sofa piled with plates of spoiled food. Zoya Sevrukova said she'd been bedridden for seven years, and that she spends most of her time seated, playing solitaire with a worn pack of cards.

"It's really cold now. If it weren't for my son, I would freeze," she said.

Sevrukov said he'd asked a friend from Kharkiv, the regional capital, to buy him an electric heater — just in case the power is restored. It's almost too much to even think about the deprivation that could lie ahead.

"I hope we'll have electricity soon, so we can live through this winter somehow," he said.

HEADLINE	10/17 UN: tribal clashes kill 13 in southern Sudan
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/renewed-tribal-clashes-kill-13-southern-sudan-91622595">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/renewed-tribal-clashes-kill-13-southern-sudan-91622595</a>
GIST	<p>CAIRO -- Renewed tribal clashes in southern Sudan have killed at least 13 people and injured more than two dozen others since late last week in the latest violence to hit the chaotic nation in recent months, the U.N. said Monday.</p> <p>The violence in the Blue Nile province came as the country's ruling generals and the main factions of the sprawling pro-democracy movement have made progress in internationally backed talks. The discussions aim to find a way out of last year's military coup that plunged Sudan into worsening turmoil.</p> <p>Clashes between the Hausa and Birta ethnic groups began Thursday over a land dispute in the Wad al-Mahi District, according to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The fighting, which lasted for four days before subsiding Sunday, displaced at least 1,200 people who were taking refuge in schools there, it said.</p> <p>Government offices and the town's market were closed, making it difficult for its residents to get their daily needs, it said. Authorities also imposed restrictions on people's movements in the area amid fears of revenge attacks, it said.</p> <p>The U.N. migration agency said the Jabalaween tribe, who are on the side of Brita group, expelled their rivals, the Hausa, from the area, which has been inaccessible to humanitarian agencies.</p> <p>The fighting between the two tribes originally began in mid-July. A total of 149 people were killed and 124 others were wounded as of Oct. 6, according to OCHA.</p> <p>The fighting in the Blue Nile triggered violent protests in other provinces where thousands, mostly Hausa, took to the streets to protest the government's lack of response to the clashes.</p> <p>It is the latest tribal violence to hit Sudan, which is home to several long-running ethnic conflicts. The country was already in turmoil since the military took over the government in a coup last year.</p> <p>The military's takeover removed a civilian-led Western backed government, upending the country's short-lived transition to democracy after nearly three decades of repressive rule by autocrat Omar al-Bashir. A popular uprising forced the removal of al-Bashir and his government in April 2019.</p> <p>In July, Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, the country's leading military officer who mounted the coup in October last year, said the military would withdraw from politics and allow political forces to form a civilian government to complete the country's transition.</p> <p>The Forces for the Declaration of Freedom and Change — an alliance of political parties and protest groups — said the military has agreed on a draft constitutional document written by the country's Bar Association. The document allows the appointment by "revolutionary forces" of a civilian prime minister to lead the country through elections within 24 months.</p> <p>Khalid Omar, a former minister and leading pro-democracy activist, said they engaged with the military and international parties, and they found that the generals "are serious in handing over power to civilians."</p> <p>"This is a positive sign that we should seize and build on," he told a news conference Monday in the capital of Khartoum.</p> <p>He said they would discuss the draft constitutional document with other political and protest groups, with the aim of ending the coup.</p>

	<p>The pro-democracy movement has yet to agree on a prime minister to form a transitional government amid growing differences and disputes among the alliance members. Many groups, including the Communist Party and the Resistance Committees, which led anti-coup street protests, reject negotiations with the military. They demand that those behind the deadly crackdown on the protests be tried in court.</p> <p>More than 100 people were killed and thousands were injured in the violent crackdown on the near-weekly street protests since the coup.</p> <p>Osman Mirghani, a Sudanese analyst and the editor of the daily newspaper al-Tayar, said such disputes were a main obstacle to ending the political deadlock.</p> <p>“For over three months, they are unable to agree among themselves to name a prime minister,” he said in a phone interview. “Time is on the side of the military.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 Scrutiny: Russia role in Burkina Faso crisis</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russian-role-burkina-faso-crisis-scrutiny-91662057">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russian-role-burkina-faso-crisis-scrutiny-91662057</a>
GIST	<p>OUAGADOULO, Burkina Faso -- Within hours of Burkina Faso's second coup this year, the head of Russia's shadowy mercenary outfit Wagner Group was among the first to congratulate the new junta leader in West Africa.</p> <p>In a message posted on Telegram, Yevgeny Prigozhin praised the mutinous soldiers for doing what “was necessary.”</p> <p>That same day, pro-Kremlin political analyst Sergei Markov, posted that the Russian people had helped Capt. Ibrahim Traore, the new coup leader. And he predicted that Burkina Faso's new leadership would turn to Russia for help instead of former colonizer France.</p> <p>As Traore now solidifies his grip on power in Burkina Faso, questions are already swirling about his relationship with Russia and how much it played a hand in catapulting him and his allies to power.</p> <p>The recent coup “could be a gateway to a more assertive Russian policy towards the Sahel,” said Samuel Ramani, associate fellow at the Royal United Services Institute, a defense and security think tank.</p> <p>“The Burkina Faso coup that we just witnessed could be the first example of Russia playing a part in instigating a coup rather than just capitalizing on pre-existing unrest,” Ramani said.</p> <p>Asked about the coup in a call with reporters earlier this month, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov wouldn’t comment on prospects of establishing ties with the country’s new leaders.</p> <p>And the Kremlin denies links to the Wagner Group, though Western analysts call it a tool of Russian President Vladimir Putin.</p> <p>Wagner Group mercenaries already have been establishing a foothold for Russia in at least half a dozen African countries, including in Central African Republic, Sudan and Mali, which is battling an insurgency similar to the one in Burkina Faso that has killed thousands and displaced some 2 million people.</p> <p>The group has been accused of committing human rights abuses. Earlier this year, it was linked to at least six alleged civilian massacres and the extrajudicial killings of 300 people in Moura village in Mali, according to the Africa Center for Strategic Studies.</p> <p>“What we observe is that elsewhere in Africa today there are worrying deployments of the Wagner militias, and we have been able to see on the ground that the effects of these militias lead to abuses of the population – we saw crimes that unfolded in Mali, in the Central African Republic, in Mozambique —</p>

also the pillaging of natural resources, and most of all, zero effectiveness in the fight against terrorism,” said Anne-Claire Legendre, the French foreign ministry spokeswoman.

France, which has had troops in the region since 2013 when it helped drive Islamic extremists from power in northern Mali, is facing growing pushback from populations who say its presence has yielded little results amid escalating jihadi violence. In the wake of Burkina Faso’s latest coup, the French Embassy and the French Institute in the capital, Ouagadougou, were attacked by protesters waving Russian flags.

It’s unclear what role, if any, Russia played in orchestrating last month’s coup or if it just capitalized on the unrest. However, people with close ties to the military ruling party said pressure had been mounting on the first coup leader, Lt. Col. Paul Henri Sandaogo Damiba, for months to work more closely with Russia.

Traore and other officers had urged Damiba to work with more partners, notably Russia, but Damiba refused, a junta member who spoke on condition of anonymity for his safety told The Associated Press.

Traore did not respond to multiple attempts for comment. In an interview with Radio France Internationale last week he played down questions about turning to Russia and said Burkina Faso had already been partnering with Moscow.

“I don’t see what’s so special about seeing a Russian flag being waved in Ouagadougou,” he told RFI.

Mamadou Drabo, executive secretary for Save Burkina, a civil society group that supports the junta, said he tried to mediate tensions for weeks before the coup because soldiers were upset at the lack of progress in stemming the violence. One of the biggest grievances was that Damiba wasn’t securing enough equipment, such as helicopters, which junta members wanted to buy from Russia since France wouldn’t give them any, he said.

Despite the Wagner Group’s controversial track record in other countries, people are so desperate for change they’re willing to take the chance, he said.

“If today we say that we don’t want Wagner then how long are we going to stay in this war?” Drabo said. “We don’t want Burkina to be turned into Somalia.”

After Damiba overthrew the democratically elected president in January, he asked Burkinabes to give him until September to show results in the fight against Islamic extremists.

His government created an overarching command center to strengthen coordination and set up local dialogue committees aimed at getting jihadists to lay down their weapons. Burkina Faso’s military acquired three combat helicopters and drones, but the security situation still deteriorated.

The number of people killed between the end of January and September, when Damiba was in power, rose more than 100% from the same time last year -- 1,545 to 3,244 people killed -- according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project.

Last month, a transport convoy going to the besieged town of Djibo was ambushed by jihadis who killed at least 37 people, the majority of them soldiers. The attack is widely believed to be what led to Damiba’s undoing and his resistance to stronger collaboration with Russia also played a role, say civil society groups and junta members.

But many civilians and analysts think talk of greater Russian involvement is overblown. Even if Burkina Faso wanted Russian help, it’s unclear if it would be possible given that Russia is struggling to find soldiers for its war in Ukraine.

“In the absence of a promised deployment it’s not certain that (Traore) would take steps against the French forces,” said Andrew Lebovich, a research fellow at the Clingendael Institute, a Dutch think tank.

	<p>Many in Burkina Faso, wary of years of foreign intervention, say that regardless of who steps in nothing will change.</p> <p>“Whether it’s Russia or France or someone else, they all want the same thing: control and influence,” said Ousmane Amirou Dicko, a traditional leader known as the Emir of Liptako.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>10/17 Haiti calls for help; world mulls assistance</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/thousands-protest-haiti-discuss-troop-request-91640555">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/thousands-protest-haiti-discuss-troop-request-91640555</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>UNITED NATIONS -- The United States and Mexico said Monday they are preparing a U.N. resolution that would authorize an international mission to help improve security in Haiti, whose government issued a “distress call” for the people of the crisis-wracked nation.</p> <p>U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield made the announcement at an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council as thousands across Haiti organized protests demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Ariel Henry. The demonstrations came on the day the country commemorated the death of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, a slave who became the leader of the world’s first Black republic.</p> <p>The U.S. ambassador said the proposed “non-U.N.” mission would be limited in time and scope and be led by “a partner country” that was not named “with the deep, necessary experience required for such an effort to be effective.” It would have a mandate to use military force if necessary.</p> <p>She said the resolution being worked on is a “direct response” to a request on Oct. 7 by prime minister Henry and the Haitian Council of Ministers for international assistance to help restore security and alleviate the humanitarian crisis. It reflects one option in a letter from U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to the council on Oct. 9 that called for deployment of a rapid action force by one or several U.N. member states to help Haiti’s National Police.</p> <p>Both Russia and China raised questions about sending a foreign armed force to Haiti.</p> <p>Haiti has been gripped by inflation, causing rising food and fuel prices, and exacerbating protests that have brought society to the breaking point. Daily life in Haiti began to spin out of control last month just hours after the prime minister said fuel subsidies would be eliminated, causing prices to double. Gangs blocked the entrance to the Varreux fuel terminal, leading to a severe shortage of fuel at a time that rising prices have put food and fuel out of reach of many Haitians, clean water is scarce, and the country is trying to deal with a cholera outbreak.</p> <p>Political instability in Latin America’s poorest country has simmered ever since last year’s still-unsolved assassination of Haiti’s president Jovenel Moïse, who had faced opposition protests calling for his resignation over corruption charges and claims that his five-year term had ended. Moïse had dissolved the majority of Parliament in January 2020 after failing to hold legislative elections in 2019 amid political gridlock.</p> <p>Haiti’s Foreign Minister Jean Victor Geneus said he came to the Security Council with a “distress call” from the Haitian people to tell the world they “are not living — they are suffering.”</p> <p>Haiti urgently needs “robust support” to help the police stem the humanitarian crisis, neutralize the the gangs, guarantee fuel distribution and facilitate a return to normal life, he said.</p> <p>Thomas-Greenfield said the resolution authorizing the security mission is coupled with a resolution obtained by The Associated Press last week that would impose an arms embargo, asset freeze and travel ban on influential Haitian gang leader Jimmy Cherizier, nicknamed “Barbeque.” It also would target other Haitian individuals and groups who engage in actions that threaten the peace, security or stability of the Western Hemisphere’s poorest country, according to the text obtained Thursday by The Associated Press.</p>



Some diplomats expressed hope for a vote on the sanctions resolution this week, but Russia's deputy U.N. Ambassador Dmitry Polyansky said Moscow can't support quickly pushing through a sanctions resolution.

"In depth analysis and detailed negotiations" are required, he said, "to make sure that the measures are aimed at restoring government control and not be perceived as is frequently the case as a way of punishing the entire country and its people."

The U.S. ambassador stressed that the United States is "keenly aware of the history of international intervention in Haiti, and specifically of concerns about the council authorizing a response that could lead to an open-ended peacekeeping role."

The Security Council and the international community must seek "a different course" to respond to the security and dire humanitarian crises in Haiti, which require "targeted international assistance" that must be coupled with "support for political dialogue and backed by sustained international pressure on the actors supporting gang activity."

Reflecting opposition to foreign interference in Haiti, Marco Duvivier, a 35-year-old auto parts store manager, who joined Monday's protest in Port-au-Prince said: "The U.S. needs Haiti to make its own decisions and not interfere in Haiti's business."

"Life is not going to get better with an international force," he said.

China's deputy U.N. Ambassador Geng Shuang noted prime minister Henry's call, but also the opposition by some political parties and groups to the presence of a foreign armed force in Haiti.

"At a time when the Haitian government lacks legitimacy and is unable to govern, will sending such a rapid action force to Haiti receive the understanding, support and cooperation from the parties in Haiti, or will it face resistance or even trigger violent confrontation from the population?," he asked. "These are things we need to consider ... and to treat with caution."

Since the gang led by "Barbeque" surrounded the fuel terminal, the distribution of more than 10 million gallons of gasoline and fuel and more than 800,000 gallons of kerosene stored on site have been blocked.

Gas stations remain shuttered, hospitals have slashed services and businesses including banks and grocery stores have cut their hours as everyone across the country runs out of fuel.

The situation has worsened a recent cholera outbreak, with hundreds hospitalized and dozens dead amid a scarcity of potable water and other basic supplies.

Haiti's last cholera outbreak was a result of U.N. peacekeepers from Nepal introducing the bacteria into the country's largest river by sewage. Nearly 10,000 people died and more than 850,000 were sickened.

"We don't need a foreign force. It's not going to solve anything," Jean Venel said.

Helen La Lime, the U.N. special envoy for Haiti, told the Security Council in a video briefing from the capital Port-au-Prince that "a humanitarian emergency is now at our doorstep" with disruptions to hospital operations and water supplies impacting the response to the cholera outbreak.

She said appeal by diplomats, the U.N. and others to establish a humanitarian corridor have gone unheeded, and insecurity is rife, with nearly a thousand kidnappings reported in 2022 and millions of children prevented from attending school.

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HEADLINE	10/17 Australia reversal: Tel Aviv capital of Israel
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SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/australia-drops-recognition-jerusalem-israels-capital-91654984">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/australia-drops-recognition-jerusalem-israels-capital-91654984</a>
GIST	<p>CANBERRA, Australia -- Australia has reversed a previous government's recognition of west Jerusalem as Israel's capital, the foreign minister said Tuesday, prompting consternation from Israel.</p> <p>The center-left Labor Party government Cabinet agreed to again recognize Tel Aviv as the capital and reaffirmed that Jerusalem's status must be resolved in peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, Foreign Minister Penny Wong said.</p> <p>Australia remained committed to a two-party solution to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, and “we will not support an approach that undermines this prospect,” Wong said.</p> <p>Israel's Prime Minister Yair Lapid expressed disappointment in Australia's changed position.</p> <p>"Jerusalem is the eternal undivided capital of Israel and nothing will change that,” Lapid said in a statement.</p> <p>Israel’s Foreign Ministry said it will summon the Australian ambassador over the issue.</p> <p>Former conservative Prime Minister Scott Morrison formally recognized west Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December 2018, although the Australian embassy remained in Tel Aviv.</p> <p>The change followed then-U.S. President Donald Trump’s decision to shift the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. President Joe Biden has kept the embassy in Jerusalem as the U.S. steps back from its once-intense mediation between the Israelis and Palestinians, who have not held substantive peace talks in more than a decade.</p> <p>Wong described Morrison’s move as out of step internationally and a “cynical play” to win a byelection in a Sydney locale with a large Jewish population.</p> <p>Morrison’s Liberal Party ran Jewish candidate Dave Sharma who was defeated in the byelection but won the seat in the next general election.</p> <p>Morrison’s government was elected out of office in May after nine years in power.</p> <p>Nasser Mashni, vice president of the human rights group Australia Palestine Advocacy Network, thanked the government for “differentiating itself from the dangerous political posturing of the previous government.”</p> <p>“This reversal brings Australia back into the international consensus — Australia must not pre-empt the final status of Jerusalem,” Mashni said in a statement.</p> <p>“Israel asserts that the entire city is exclusively theirs, denying Palestinian connection to their ancient spiritual, cultural and economic capital,” Mashni added.</p> <p>Morrison, who remains an opposition lawmaker, said the government's decision was disappointing.</p> <p>The decision "represents a further diminution in Australia’s support for the state of Israel by the Labor government from the high water mark established by the Morrison government,” his office said in a statement.</p> <p>But opposition leader Peter Dutton left the door open to the conservatives abandoning Morrison’s policy.</p> <p>“We’ll make an announcement about our policy in the run-up to the next election,” Dutton told reporters. The next election is due in 2025.</p>

	<p>Opposition foreign affairs spokesperson Simon Birmingham described the change as a “completely unnecessary decision” that followed a “shambolic process.”</p> <p>In the 1967 Mideast war, Israel captured east Jerusalem, home to holy sites of three faiths, along with the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Palestinians seek east Jerusalem as the capital of a future state. The status of Jerusalem remains one of the thorniest issues in the decadeslong conflict and has precipitated numerous rounds of violence.</p> <p>Only a handful of countries, including Kosovo and Guatemala, have joined the U.S. in recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital.</p>
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## Cyber, Tech Awareness

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HEADLINE	10/17 Wikipedia a front Russia propaganda war?
SOURCE	<a href="https://therecord.media/researchers-wikipedia-a-front-in-russian-propaganda-war/">https://therecord.media/researchers-wikipedia-a-front-in-russian-propaganda-war/</a>
GIST	<p>New research examining pro-Kremlin edits made to the English-language page for <a href="#">the Russo-Ukrainian war</a> has shed light on how Wikipedia can be manipulated for information warfare.</p> <p>The analysis, from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) and the Centre of the Analysis of Social Media (CSAM) in the U.K., could help develop systems that can detect platform manipulation on one of the world’s most popular websites.</p> <p>Published on Monday, the <a href="#">study</a> detailed suspicious edits of the Russo-Ukrainian page on the digital encyclopedia, alongside what it describes as a methodology for identifying potentially coordinated manipulation efforts targeting Wikipedia in general.</p> <p>Carl Miller, one of the paper’s authors, stressed that the research wasn’t a smoking gun for state-linked manipulation. “We haven’t attributed suspicious editing activity directly to the Russian state. We were never going to be able to do that,” he said. “The idea was to try to characterize behavior already known to be suspicious to see whether — in time — we can use this as signals for undetected suspicious activity.”</p> <p>The ISD/CSAM analysis focused on 86 accounts that had been editing the Russo-Ukrainian war page, which were subsequently banned by Wikipedia for violating its rules, including for being operated as “sock-puppet” accounts used to disguise who their real operator was.</p> <p>Although the research “did not set out to identify unknown suspicious activity, but rather to understand and describe activity that was already known to be suspicious,” the manipulation of Wikipedia they detailed has not been widely reported and suggests the platform could potentially be exploited similarly to social media platforms.</p> <p>The editors the analysis focused on were behind 681 edits to the page. Miller said the researchers identified 16 links to state-sponsored media introduced by those edits, and acknowledged this was “probably not the best way of identifying suspicious edits.” So the researchers then began to analyze each of the edits manually.</p> <p>The manual analysis found the edits exhibited “narratives consistent with Kremlin-sponsored information warfare” and cast doubt on the objectivity of pro-Western narratives while maximizing the objectivity of pro-Kremlin accounts.</p> <p>The edited material also supported Kremlin descriptions of ongoing situations, including introducing historical narratives about the ousting of former Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich — an incident</p>

preceded by his refusal to sign an association agreement with the European Union and then shortly followed by Russia's military annexation of Crimea.

Other edits added "Kremlin quotations and press releases explicitly into the page to increase the salience of pro-Russian arguments and viewpoints," the authors wrote.

The researchers said their aim was to examine the ways in which Wikipedia could be vulnerable to the same kinds of manipulation that have targeted other social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Reddit.

"Wikipedia has been famously resilient to vandalism. All edits are open, vandalism can be rolled back quickly, pages can be locked and protected, and the site is patrolled by a combination of bots and editors," the study states.

Describing itself as "a short contribution to the discussions around the threats posed by information warfare" the paper says one question remains: "How vulnerable is Wikipedia to information warfare which might use subtler methodologies and be executed over longer lengths of time?"

While the U.S. government accused Russian organizations of engaging in "information warfare" by operating social media campaigns to inflame division and muddy public understanding of news events, [a declassified Intelligence Community Assessment](#) into that interference during the 2016 presidential election did not identify any such activities on Wikipedia.

For the general public, Wikipedia competes with the most respected news organizations in the world [as a trusted source of information](#), despite being constructed by volunteers who are required to link to source material — often provided by those same news organizations.

It is regularly targeted by reputation management companies and other forms of malicious editing behavior designed to promote particular views and, in September 2021, the Wikimedia foundation took action against 19 users, 7 of whom were banned. In an announcement, the organization [linked the action to concerns about "infiltration"](#) from mainland China.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 Cyberattacks accelerating in Europe</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/vulnerability-management/cyberattacks-accelerating-in-europe-moodys-says">https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/vulnerability-management/cyberattacks-accelerating-in-europe-moodys-says</a>
GIST	<p>The number of cyberattacks in Europe has grown significantly this year, highlighting the urgent need for organizations to develop security strategies to protect operations and financial profile, according to <a href="#">a new report</a> from Moody's investors Service.</p> <p>The report noted that <a href="#">Russian invasion of Ukraine</a> is a contributing factor, with around 38% of attacks related to it. But the conflict is not the only reason for the acceleration. Moody's also found that the number of attacks that are unrelated to the conflict in the first nine months of 2022 is already more than double the number it reported in all last year.</p> <p>"Increasing digitalization across industries creates a higher number of potential targets as well, and that is unfortunately intensively used by hackers," Dirk Goedde, VP senior analyst at Moody's told SC Media in an email.</p> <p>The report also found that the public sector has a higher number of attacks because it is mostly affected by distributed denial of service attacks, while private companies suffer more severe operational and financial consequences. Attacks such as ransomware and data breaches generate higher costs to companies in the private sector.</p>

“Because of the prevalence of ransomware, where employees are lured to click on links, the need to invest in [cyber awareness](#) and training is clear,” the report added.

Moody’s has yet to take a negative rating action in Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) that was caused by a cyber-criminal activity since the financial fallout from each attack has not been substantial enough to damage credit quality in a lasting way. But the company noted that the acceleration in attacks may harm profitability.

“We believe there are unavoidable side effects, such as higher cyber defense costs or lawsuits,” the report explained. “For high-profile incidents that involve data from a large number of customers, we see a risk of collective lawsuits that may, in aggregate, be significant.”

On a positive note, Moody's survey showed a rise in companies' awareness and preparedness in response to elevating cyber threats, with 87% of assessed organizations in EMEA having a manager whose responsibility includes managing cyber threats. The financial sector is the most prepared of all industries, with all companies having a cyber manager. The sector also has a higher budget, with financial service companies spending 7% of their IT budget on cybersecurity compared with the median of all sectors at 5%.

“The financial sector has a higher degree of digitalization which creates necessity to have a higher IT budget,” Goedde said. “They also spend more given the highly sensitive business model.”

To further defend the evolving cyber landscape and secure emerging innovative technologies, the European Union (EU) is proposing a revision of the current [directive on security of network and information systems](#).

In the updated directive, the EU will implement several significant changes, such as generating greater capabilities in terms of higher level of supervision and enforcement, building closer collaboration between EU member states to better coordinating vulnerability disclosures, and setting higher security requirements.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Pro-Russia hackers DDoS Bulgaria govt.</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/prorussia-hackers-ddos-bulgarian/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/prorussia-hackers-ddos-bulgarian/</a>
GIST	<p>A wave of DDoS attacks rocked the Bulgarian government over the weekend, with Russia the prime suspect, according to reports.</p> <p>Traffic flooded the websites of the Bulgarian President, the National Revenue Agency, and the ministries of internal affairs, defense, and justice, according to several local reports.</p> <p>Telecoms firms, airports, banks and some media companies were also targeted in the October 15 campaign, according to the <a href="#">Sofia Globe</a>.</p> <p>The head of Bulgaria’s National Investigation Service, Borislav Sarafov, reportedly said the authorities had identified the suspects as coming from the Russian city of Magnitogorsk.</p> <p>“We will try to identify all those involved in this hacker attack and bring them to court in Bulgaria, if Russian judicial authorities respond and they are extradited. If not, we will try them in absentia,” he added.</p> <p>However, <a href="#">other reports said</a> that notorious Russian cybercrime outfit Killnet had already claimed responsibility.</p> <p>The group also claimed to have launched DDoS attacks against at least 14 US airports <a href="#">earlier in October</a>. The collective has targeted other European organizations this year, in attacks largely aligned with the interests of the Russian state.</p>

	<p>Those efforts were met with a declaration of “cyber war” <a href="#">from the Anonymous hacktivist group</a> back in May.</p> <p>As a NATO and EU member, Bulgaria could certainly be a Russian target. Although Sofia’s assistance to Ukraine has so far been limited to “military-technical” efforts, it may expand this to weaponry if the National Assembly votes that way this week.</p> <p>The attacks on Bulgarian government websites reportedly caused minor outages but not much more disruption than that.</p> <p>“The cyber-attack was well repelled and there was no damage,” said caretaker defense minister, Dimitar Stoyanov.</p> <p>DDoS attacks have been a regular occurrence during the war in Ukraine, often spilling over into attacks on the country’s allies.</p> <p><a href="#">A report</a> from September claimed that the volume of DDoS attacks against UK financial institutions surged during the first few months of the Ukraine war.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Hackers inside Hong Kong govt. network</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hackers-compromised-hong-kong-govt-orgs-network-for-a-year/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hackers-compromised-hong-kong-govt-orgs-network-for-a-year/</a>
GIST	<p>Researchers at Symantec have uncovered cyberattacks attributed to the China-linked espionage actor APT41 (a.k.a. Winnti) that breached government organizations in Hong Kong and remained undetected for a year in some cases.</p> <p>The threat actor has been using custom malware called Spyder Loader, which has been previously attributed to the group.</p> <p>In May 2022, researchers at Cybereason discovered ‘<a href="#">Operation CuckooBees</a>’, which had been underway since 2019 focusing on high-tech and manufacturing firms in North America, East Asia, and Western Europe.</p> <p>Symantec’s report notes that there are signs that the newly discovered Hong Kong activity is part of the same operation, and Winnti’s targets are government entities in the special administrative region.</p> <p><b>Spyder Loader</b></p> <p>In Operation CuckooBees, Winnti used a new version of the Spyder Loader backdoor. Symantec’s report indicates that the hackers continue to evolve the malware, deploying several variants on the targets, all with the same functions.</p> <p>Some of the similarities Symantec found when compared to the version <a href="#">analyzed by Cybereason</a> include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• using the CryptoPP C++ library</li> <li>• abuse of rundll32.exe for the execution of the malware loader</li> <li>• compiled as a 64-bit DLL modified copy of the SQLite3 DLL for managing SQLite databases, sqlite3.dll, with a malicious export (sqlite3_extension_init)</li> </ul> <p>Used in the initial infection stage, Spyder Loader loads AES-encrypted blobs that create the next-stage payload, “wlbctrl.dll.”</p> <p><b>Activity and goals</b></p> <p>Symantec analysts also observed the deployment of the Mimikatz password extractor in the latest campaigns, allowing the threat actor to burrow deeper into the victim network.</p>



	<p>Additionally, the <a href="#">researchers saw</a> "a trojanized ZLib DLL that had multiple malicious exports, one of which appeared to be waiting for communication from a command-and-control server, while the other would load a payload from the provided file name in the command line."</p> <p>Although Symantec couldn't retrieve the final payload, it appears that the goal in APT41's latest campaign was to collect intelligence from key entities in Hong Kong.</p> <p>Symantec expects Winnti to continue to evolve its malware toolkit and introduce new payloads, as well as add more layers of obfuscation where possible.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 Ransom Cartel tied to defunct REvil?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/tactics-tie-ransom-cartel-group-to-defunct-revil-ransomware">https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/tactics-tie-ransom-cartel-group-to-defunct-revil-ransomware</a>
GIST	<p>Although the REvil ransomware-as-a-service operation appeared to evaporate last October, analysts have found the group's influence is still considerable.</p> <p>Notably, threat researchers from Unit 42 reported finding connections between REvil activities and that of <a href="#">ransomware</a> group Ransom Cartel, an up-and-coming cybercrime group claiming to offer "the same, yet improved software" as REvil.</p> <p>Following analysis, the Unit 42 team determined Ransom Cartel somehow was able to gain access to REvil ransomware source code. Ransom Cartel also mimics REvil tactics, including double extortion, Unit 42 added.</p> <p>However, the researchers said there are some aspects of the REvil operation that Ransom Cartel seems to lack.</p> <p>"Based on the fact that the Ransom Cartel operators clearly have access to the original REvil ransomware source code, yet likely do not possess the obfuscation engine used to encrypt strings and hide API calls," the Unit 42 <a href="#">ransomware report</a> explained, "we speculate that the operators of Ransom Cartel had a relationship with the REvil group at one point, before starting their own operation."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 Ransomware attack at German newspapers</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/ransomware-attack-halts-circulation-of-some-german-newspapers/?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/ransomware-attack-halts-circulation-of-some-german-newspapers/?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>German newspaper 'Heilbronn Stimme' published today's 28-page issue in e-paper form after a Friday ransomware attack crippled its printing systems.</p> <p>On Saturday, the newspaper issued an "emergency" six-page edition while all planned obituaries were posted on the website. Phone and email communication remained offline during the weekend.</p> <p>The regional publication has a circulation of about 75,000 copies, but due to printing issues has temporarily lifted the paywall from its website, which counts approximately 2 million visitors per month.</p> <p>Editor-in-chief Uwe Ralf Heer said that the attack impacted the entire Stimme Mediengruppe media group, which includes the companies 'Pressedruck', 'Echo', and 'RegioMail.'</p> <p>Echo, which circulates 254,000 copies, was also affected by the cyberattack, and there were issues accessing its e-paper on the website. The online news portal Echo24.de, however, continues operations as normal.</p>



Heer states that the attack was conducted by a well-known cybercriminal group that encrypted their systems on Friday night and left ransom notes behind. However, as of Saturday afternoon, no specific ransom demands have been made.

BleepingComputer has contacted Stimme Mediengruppe for more information about the attack, and we will update this post as soon as we know more.

#### **Employees working from home**

The newspaper's editors were told to work from home on their personal computers, and new email addresses were assigned to them.

The media group is working with the police to find a way to resolve the technical issues as soon as possible, as well as to try to identify the perpetrators.

Cybersecurity experts from the state of Baden-Württemberg are also assisting in the remediation effort at the request of Interior Minister Thomas Strobl.

"We officially work together with the police, data protection, and external experts in order to be able to perform as quickly as possible with the usual quality," [reads the notice](#).

"However, we cannot currently foresee whether we will deliver a newspaper every day in the coming week."

Until the printing systems return to normal operational status, Heilbronn Stimme will continue to print emergency editions via a third party in Karlsruhe.

Because the media group is also a distributor, the circulation of other popular newspapers like 'Süddeutsche Zeitung' and 'Stuttgarter Zeitung' in the district of Heilbronn (pop. 350,000) will also stop until further notice.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Hurricane Ian leveraged in cyber scams</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.scmagazine.com/brief/cybercrime/hurricane-ian-leveraged-in-cyber-scams?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.scmagazine.com/brief/cybercrime/hurricane-ian-leveraged-in-cyber-scams?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>Cybercriminals have been exploiting the aftermath of Hurricane Ian to facilitate personal data exfiltration and Federal Emergency Management Agency fund theft, according to <a href="#">The Record</a>, a news site by cybersecurity firm Recorded Future.</p> <p>Stealing disaster relief assistance is being discussed by hackers on WhatsApp, noted Cofense Principal Threat Advisor Ronnie Tokazowski, who said that screenshots shared with him by a colleague showed how fraudulent claims could be filed on DisasterAssistance.gov.</p> <p>Numerous Nigerian groups have been behind such scams, but U.S.-based money mules or accounts are also being used for laundering the funds, Tokazowski added.</p> <p>Another scam aimed at stealing Hurricane Ian relief funds involving the use of phishing emails has been observed by INKY, with INKY's Bukar Alibe noting that the Small Business Administration and Red Cross have been spoofed in phishing emails.</p> <p>Threat actors have been launching thousands of <a href="#">credential stealing attacks</a> involving contractor services, said Slashnext CEO Patrick Harr.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Critical flaw in Cobalt Strike software</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://thehackernews.com/2022/10/critical-rce-vulnerability-discovered.html?&amp;web_view=true">https://thehackernews.com/2022/10/critical-rce-vulnerability-discovered.html?&amp;web_view=true</a>

GIST	<p>HelpSystems, the company behind the Cobalt Strike software platform, has released an out-of-band security update to address a remote code execution vulnerability that could allow an attacker to take control of targeted systems.</p> <p>Cobalt Strike is a commercial red-team framework that's mainly used for adversary simulation, but cracked versions of the software have been <a href="#">actively abused</a> by ransomware operators and espionage-focused advanced persistent threat (APT) groups alike.</p> <p>The <a href="#">post-exploitation tool</a> consists of a team server, which functions as a command-and-control (C2) component, and a beacon, the default malware used to create a connection to the team server and drop next-stage payloads.</p> <p>The issue, tracked as CVE-2022-42948, affects Cobalt Strike version 4.7.1, and stems from an incomplete patch released on September 20, 2022, to rectify a cross-site scripting (<a href="#">XSS</a>) vulnerability (<a href="#">CVE-2022-39197</a>) that could lead to remote code execution.</p> <p>"The XSS vulnerability could be triggered by manipulating some client-side UI input fields, by simulating a Cobalt Strike implant check-in or by hooking a Cobalt Strike implant running on a host," IBM X-Force researchers Rio Sherri and Ruben Boonen <a href="#">said</a> in a write-up.</p> <p>However, it was found that remote code execution could be triggered in specific cases using the <a href="#">Java Swing framework</a>, the graphical user interface toolkit that's used to design Cobalt Strike.</p> <p>"Certain components within Java Swing will automatically interpret any text as HTML content if it starts with &lt;html&gt;," Greg Darwin, software development manager at HelpSystems, <a href="#">explained</a> in a post.</p> <p>"Disabling automatic parsing of html tags across the entire client was enough to mitigate this behavior."</p> <p>This means that a malicious actor could exploit this behavior by means of an <a href="#">HTML &lt;object&gt; tag</a>, utilizing it to load a custom payload hosted on a remote server and inject it within the <a href="#">note field</a> as well as the graphical file explorer menu in the Cobalt strike UI.</p> <p>"It should be noted here that this is a very powerful exploitation primitive," IBM researchers said, adding it could be used to "construct a fully featured cross-platform payload that would be able to execute code on the user's machine regardless of the operating system flavor or architecture."</p> <p>The findings come a little over a week after the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) <a href="#">cautioned</a> of the continued weaponization of legitimate tools such as Cobalt Strike in attacks aimed at the healthcare sector.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Leak adds to Australia security reckoning</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bankinfosecurity.com/new-data-leaks-add-to-australias-data-security-reckoning-a-20280?web_view=true">https://www.bankinfosecurity.com/new-data-leaks-add-to-australias-data-security-reckoning-a-20280?web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>Personal data from MyDeal.com.au, a marketplace owned by Australia's largest grocery chain Woolworths Group, has appeared for sale on a data leak forum. Later on Tuesday, it was marked as sold.</p> <p>That comes as wine retailer Vinomofu disclosed a breach on Monday and as the Optus telecommunications breach continues to fuel concerns over data security and if Australian data protection laws are adequate.</p> <p>The 500-line sample data from MyDeal appears to be legitimate, says <a href="#">Troy Hunt</a>, a data breach expert who created <a href="#">Have I Been Pwned</a>, a service that notifies people when their email address has appeared in a new data breach.</p>

MyDeal's website will reveal if an email address is already in its system when trying to register a new account, Hunt says. Email addresses in the sample are registered with MyDeal.

An attacker, who goes by the nickname "Christian Dior," was selling the entire MyDeal data set for \$600. Later on Tuesday, Dior marked the data as "sold" and wrote on Telegram that the "MyDeal DB has been sold – won't be selling any more copies."

Woolworths Group, which owns MyDeal, [disclosed on Friday](#) that an attacker gained access to its customer relationship management system using a compromised login credential. CRM software is widely used amongst organisations to store and process user data.

Dior confirmed to ISMG that's how he gained access to MyDeal. "Most of the access was gained from password reuse. They [MyDeal] didn't even notice until we started [f\*\*\*ing] with customers' support tickets."

Woolworths said 2.2 million people are affected. For 1.2 million people, only their email address was exposed. For the rest, names, email addresses, phone numbers, delivery addresses and sometimes birth dates were exposed. Woolworths said MyDeal does not store passport details, driver's license numbers or payment information.

Dior told ISMG he sent an email to around a dozen people at MyDeal asking for \$20,000 in exchange for deleting the data. Dior says he's not sure if MyDeal responded, as he lost access to MyDeal's systems a day later "while I was high on mushrooms." Cybercriminals often try to extort organizations after stealing sensitive data with the promise that data will be deleted.

Dior published a screenshot that indicated access to MyDeal's Atlassian Confluence server, which is a collaboration tool. The URL visible in the screenshot is mydeal.atlassian[dot]net. The screenshot shows a page open in MyDeal's internal wiki that shows its cyber security and breach response policies.

Dior also shared screenshots with ISMG that have not publicly been released, including a network infrastructure map. That is too sensitive to post a screenshot, but it's a complex diagram showing how MyDeal's infrastructure is connected, from SaaS services to e-commerce systems to payments to development systems to the CRM system that was hacked.

Dior also said he accessed source code in MyDeal's Bitbucket, which is a software platform for managing code development. He was also inside MyDeal's Zendesk customer support system.

### **Australia's Privacy Reckoning**

The MyDeal development comes as an Australian wine retailer, Vinomofo, began notifying its customers around Monday of a data breach involving its customer database. According to a [notification](#), Vinomofo says someone unlawfully accessed the database when it was connected to a testing platform.

Hunt says organizations often make the mistake of using real data within test environments, which can lead to trouble if there is a compromise.

Vinomofo didn't say how many people are affected. It maintained the risk is low but that the compromised data includes name, gender, birth date, email and phone number. It says it reported the breach to the Australian Cyber Security Centre and the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner.

Adding to the mix was an [announcement](#) on Monday by health insurer Medibank, which said it "contained" malicious activity that likely would have lead to a ransomware attack. Medibank said it has so far found no indication that customer data was taken from its network (see [Australian Insurer Medibank Says Incident Was Ransomware](#)).

Although significant, the MyDeal and Vinomofo breaches follow what was perhaps the greatest privacy breach in Australian history involving Optus, the country's second-largest telecommunications company.

An attacker, who went by the nickname "Optusdata," accessed an internet-facing application programming interface that did not require authentication. It was connected to Optus's customer database. The person subsequently downloaded around 10 million current and former customer records stretching back to 2017 (see [Optus Under \\$1 Million Extortion Threat in Data Breach](#)).

The person then tried to extort Optus for US\$1 million. Two days later, Optusdata withdrew the demand, apologized for releasing data samples affecting 10,200 people and said the data would no longer be sold. Optus told ISMG the same day that it did not pay a ransom (see [Optus Attacker Halts AU\\$1.5 Million Extortion Attempt](#)).

The Optus data breach was particularly sensitive. Around 2.8 million of the 10 million people had either their [passport number](#) or [driver's license number](#) and driver's license card number revealed or [Medicare card number](#). Medicare is Australia's national insurance scheme. That data was leaked in addition to name, address, phone number and birth date.

The incident caused fury amongst current and former Optus customers and unprecedented action from the government to blunt potential fraud as a result of the breach.

Lawmakers promptly amended the Telecommunications Regulations 2021 law to allow the sharing of information related to the Optus breach with financial institutions.

"These changes will reduce the impact of this data breach on Optus customers and enable financial institutions and government agencies to implement enhanced safeguards and monitoring, according to an advisory on Friday from the [Australian Cyber and Infrastructure Security Centre](#).

The government also created the Commonwealth Credential Protection Register, which is intended to stop the fraudulent use of ID information. It added 100,000 compromised passport numbers exposed in the Optus breach to the register. Those numbers can now no longer be used with the [Document Verification Service](#) (DVS).

The DVS is a government service that lets organizations verify whether certain identity data is correct. It can be used to check the veracity of 14 documents, including birth certificates, driver's licenses and passport numbers. When entities registered with DVS request a check, DVS returns only a "yes" or "no" answer as to whether a document is correct.

In what may be a world-first, the Australian government also pressed Optus to reimburse people for fees incurred related to replacing their passports and driver's licenses. For passports, those eligible must pay for the replacement up front, however, then apply for reimbursement from Optus.

Optus will apply a credit to customers' bills to cover the cost of replacement driver's licenses, but it depends on the state or territory. Some states and territories are initially waiving the costing of replacement due to the breach. Optus has more information [here](#).

The government's pressure on Optus to reimburse those affected by the breach is striking and could send a message of increasing intolerance for data breaches and increasing immediate costs for those responsible for breaches. Consumer may often wait years to see any compensation from class-action lawsuits as a result of a breach. Those lawsuits may drag through the courts for years before they're settled.

The government is also considering strengthening privacy laws to create higher penalties for those found to have violated the country's Privacy Act. Each violation can merit a fine up to AU\$2.2 million (US\$1.38 million), but the Minister for Home Affairs and Cyber Security, Claire O'Neil, has said that figure is ["totally inappropriate."](#)

There are several investigations underway into the Optus breach, including by the [Office of the Australian Information Commissioner](#) and the [Australian Communications Media Authority](#).

HEADLINE	<b>10/17 West suppliers cut ties China chipmakers</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/10/17/export-controls-us-china-chips/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/10/17/export-controls-us-china-chips/</a>
GIST	<p>Western suppliers have started cutting ties to some Chinese chipmakers in response to new U.S. export controls, in another sign of the partial technology divorce the Biden administration is mandating to stymie China's military development.</p> <p>One large supplier of chip-making equipment, ASML, told U.S. employees to stop installing or servicing equipment at any Chinese chip factory while it sorts through the new rules. Another equipment provider, Applied Materials, said the export restrictions will prevent it from making sales of roughly \$400 million in the fourth quarter.</p> <p>It is common for Western companies to broadly suspend exports in the immediate wake of new U.S. restrictions, and then resume some later once they decipher the rules, lawyers say. But national-security experts say the <a href="#">new restrictions</a>, which aim to stop China from producing advanced chips, are among the toughest the United States has enacted.</p> <p>"I see these export controls as being hugely consequential. It goes straight to the heart of Beijing's efforts to create a domestic world class semiconductor industry," said Martijn Rasser, senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security. In particular, a new rule preventing "U.S. persons" from supporting certain Chinese chipmakers "won't just freeze China's abilities in place, it will actually lead to a degradation over time," Rasser said.</p> <p>The trade curbs could also have unintended consequences for the United States, cautioned Willy Shih, a Harvard Business School professor who specializes in technology and manufacturing. Depriving China of the ability to make the highest-tech chips could cause it to pump out even more low-end chips, driving down prices and making it hard for U.S. and Western factories to compete in that segment, he said. That in turn could leave Western buyers of such chips dependent on Chinese suppliers.</p> <p>"It's a little bit of a blunt instrument," he said of export controls. "The thing you have to worry about is collateral damage."</p> <p>The Commerce Department, which oversees the regulations, said it was looking out for any such negative effects. "That's just something we continue to watch and if there are unintended consequences we'll figure out what adjustments are appropriate," one Commerce official told The Post on Monday, speaking on the condition of anonymity because the person wasn't authorized to speak publicly.</p> <p>The official added that the rules are "not designed to rupture everything" when it comes to trade but only to "get at the Chinese capability to produce chips at a defined level."</p> <p>The export controls, announced Oct. 7, aim to slow China's ability to produce high-end semiconductors that have dual uses in commercial and military technology — and even some applications in weapons of mass destruction, the Biden administration said. For now, China <a href="#">still lags</a> behind Taiwan, South Korea and the United States in manufacturing the most high-tech chips.</p> <p>The controls essentially bar exports to China of American-made manufacturing equipment needed to produce advanced chips. They also bar export of any U.S. tools or components to Chinese factories capable of making high-end semiconductors.</p> <p>In a novel step that appears to have prompted some companies to broadly suspend trade with China, the rules also bar "U.S. persons" — including American factories, and Americans and U.S. green-card holders who work in foreign factories overseas — from supporting the development or production of advanced chips in China, unless they receive a U.S. government license.</p>

ASML, a Dutch manufacturer of high-end semiconductor manufacturing tools that has U.S. offices and many U.S. employees, immediately instructed its U.S. staff to freeze their interaction with Chinese customers.

“ASML U.S. employees must refrain — either directly or indirectly — from servicing, shipping or providing support to any customers in China until further notice, while ASML is actively assessing which particular fabs are affected by this restriction,” the company told employees in an internal letter last week, an ASML spokesman confirmed.

The company said the freeze applies to U.S. citizens, green-card holders and foreign nationals who live in the United States.

The rules are creating difficult decisions for many tech workers, Rasser said.

“There are green-card holders considered U.S. persons that are going to be in a bind. Do they want to stay in China and give up their U.S. person status or do they want to move?” he said.

Other U.S. and Western suppliers also appear to be cutting ties to Chinese chip factories. KLA Corp. and Lam Research Corp., both based in California, have paused support of already installed equipment and temporarily halted installation of new equipment at Chinese chipmaker YMTC, The Wall Street Journal [reported](#). The suppliers declined to comment. YMTC didn’t respond to a request for comment.

The new restrictions put the onus on equipment suppliers to determine whether their Chinese customers are producing advanced chips. That is freezing some trade as equipment suppliers “are scrambling to find out what work Chinese fabs do,” said Kevin Wolf, a former senior Commerce Department official who is now a partner at Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld. “Companies that don’t want to make a mistake or violate the law will pull back.”

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HEADLINE	10/17 Student loan forgiveness application online
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/application-site-opens-for-biden-student-debt-cancellation/">https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/application-site-opens-for-biden-student-debt-cancellation/</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Monday officially kicked off the application process for his student debt cancellation program and announced that 8 million borrowers had already applied for loan relief during the federal government’s soft launch period over the weekend.</p> <p>He encouraged the tens of millions eligible for potential relief to visit studentaid.gov and touted the application form that the president said would take less than five minutes to complete. An early, “beta launch” version of the online form released late Friday handled the early stream of applications “without a glitch or any difficulty,” Biden said.</p> <p>“It means more than 8 million Americans are — starting this week — on their way to receiving life-changing relief,” Biden, accompanied by Education Secretary Miguel Cardona, said Monday. The president called his program a “game-changer” for millions of Americans saddled with student loan debt.</p> <p>The number of borrowers who applied during the testing period already amounts to more than one-fourth of the total number of applicants the administration had projected would submit forms, underscoring the popularity of the program and the eagerness of borrowers to receive the debt relief. Some 8 million borrowers who have income information already on file with the Education Department would see their debt canceled without applying.</p> <p>Biden’s plan calls for \$10,000 in federal student debt cancellation for those with incomes below \$125,000 a year, or households that make less than \$250,000 a year. Those who received federal Pell Grants to attend college are eligible for an additional \$10,000. The plan makes 20 million eligible to get their federal student debt erased entirely.</p>



Biden promised to pursue widespread student debt forgiveness as a presidential candidate, but the issue went through more than a year of internal deliberation amid questions about its legality. His plan sparked intense debate ahead of the midterm elections, with Republicans and some Democrats saying it's an unfair handout for college graduates.

But on Monday, Biden offered a full-throated defense of his decision.

"My commitment was if elected president, I was going to make government work to deliver for the people," Biden said. "This rollout keeps that commitment."

He also took aim at Republican officials who have either criticized the plan or are working in court to defeat it.

"Their outrage is wrong and it's hypocritical," Biden said. "I will never apologize for helping working Americans and middle class people as they recover from the pandemic."

Biden on Monday said the White House has received more than 10,000 comments and calls of thanks from borrowers. Indeed, thousands took to social media to share the form, with many saying they submitted their applications with little trouble.

The Biden administration has touted it as a "simple, straightforward" application. It asks for the borrower's name, Social Security number, contact information and date of birth. It does not require income information but asks users to check a box attesting that they are eligible under the program's income limits.

That information will be checked against Education Department records to help identify applicants who are likely to exceed the income limits, the administration says. Those people will be asked for more information to prove their incomes.

An estimated 1 million to 5 million people will be required to provide that extra documentation, the Education Department said in a recent submission to the White House's Office of Management and Budget.

Creating and processing the form is estimated to cost nearly \$100 million, a figure that angered advocates who view the application as an unnecessary barrier. The form is meant to help exclude the roughly 5% of borrowers who exceed the income limits, but advocates say it could also deter some lower-income Americans who need the relief.

Once the Education Department begins processing applications, borrowers should expect to see their debt forgiven in four to six weeks, officials say. Most applications submitted by mid-November will be processed by Jan. 1 — the day federal student loan payments are set to resume after being paused during the pandemic.

Borrowers will be able to submit applications through the end of 2023.

The Biden administration is pushing ahead with the debt cancellation even as it fights a growing number of legal challenges. Six Republican-led states are suing to block the plan, saying it oversteps Biden's authority and will lead to financial losses for student loan servicers, which are hired to manage federal student loans and earn revenue on the interest.

A federal judge in St. Louis is now weighing the states' request for an injunction to halt the plan. In court documents, the Education Department has vowed not to finalize any of the debt cancellation before Oct. 23.

Biden acknowledged Monday that litigation is ongoing but said his administration believes the lawsuits won't ultimately affect the program.



<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	The application is found on the Department of Education's website at <a href="http://www.studentaid.gov/debt-relief/application">www.studentaid.gov/debt-relief/application</a> . The agency said it should take about five minutes to complete the entire form.

HEADLINE	<b>10/17 Judge strikes down US first digital ad tax</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/maryland-judge-strikes-nations-digital-ad-tax-91647296">https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/maryland-judge-strikes-nations-digital-ad-tax-91647296</a>
GIST	<p>ANNAPOLIS, Md. -- The nation's first tax on digital advertising was struck down as unconstitutional by a Maryland judge on Monday. It's a law that attorneys for Big Tech have contended unfairly targets companies like Facebook, Google and Amazon in a separate federal case against the same law.</p> <p>Judge Alison Asti of Anne Arundel County Circuit Court said the Maryland law violates the U.S. Constitution's prohibition on state interference with interstate commerce. She also ruled that it violates the federal Internet Tax Freedom Act, which prohibits discrimination against electronic commerce.</p> <p>The state estimated the tax on digital advertising could raise about \$250 million a year to help pay for a sweeping K-12 education measure to expand early childhood education, increase teacher salaries, boost college and career readiness and help struggling schools.</p> <p>Raquel Coombs, a spokesperson for Maryland Attorney General Brian Frosh, said the attorney general's office is reviewing the decision to determine next steps. Comptroller Peter Franchot's office also is reviewing the decision, said spokesperson Susan O'Brien.</p> <p>Verizon Media Inc. and Comcast challenged the law in the state's court. The law also is being challenged in federal court by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Oral arguments in that case are scheduled for Nov. 29.</p> <p>The Maryland law's fate in the courts is being closely watched by other states that have also weighed a similar tax for online ads.</p> <p>The law was enacted last year by the Maryland General Assembly, which is controlled by Democrats, over the veto of Republican Gov. Larry Hogan.</p> <p>The law would have taxed revenue that the affected companies make on digital advertisements shown in Maryland.</p> <p>The tax rate would have been 2.5% for businesses making more than \$100 million in global gross annual revenue; 5% for companies making \$1 billion or more; 7.5% for companies making \$5 billion or more and 10% for companies making \$15 billion or more.</p> <p>Republican lawmakers cheered the judge's ruling on Monday as "a huge win for Maryland's small businesses who rely on affordable digital advertising to market their services."</p> <p>"This is a refreshing check on Maryland's Democratic Supermajority who has no problem creating new, one-of-a-kind taxes that violate the First Amendment and tax Maryland's job creators out of business," said Sen. Bryan Simonaire, the Senate minority leader, and Sen. Justin Ready, the Senate minority whip, in a joint statement.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 Chinese scan state political parties HQs</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/10/17/chinese-hackers-are-scanning-state-political-party-headquarters-fbi-says/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/10/17/chinese-hackers-are-scanning-state-political-party-headquarters-fbi-says/</a>
GIST	<b>Chinese government hackers are scanning U.S. political party domains ahead of next month's midterm elections</b> , looking for vulnerable systems as a potential precursor to hacking operations, and the FBI is making a big push to alert potential victims to batten down the hatches.

Over the past week, FBI agents in field offices across the country have notified some Republican and Democratic state party headquarters they might be targets of the Chinese hackers, according to party and U.S. officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the matter's sensitivity.

None of the potential targets were hacked or breached, the officials said.

"The FBI is being considerably more proactive," one senior U.S. official said. "It's part of a larger move that the FBI isn't waiting for the attack to occur. They're increasingly trying to prevent."

The network scanning is part of a "comprehensive broad campaign" by the Chinese to seek potential victims, the official said. "This is what they do."

**The FBI visited at least a dozen Republican Party headquarters in recent days.**

"The RNC remains secure and we have not been compromised," Republican National Committee spokesperson **Emma Vaughn** said in an email. "Cybersecurity remains a top priority for the entire Republican ecosystem, which is why we place a premium on ensuring our stakeholders have the necessary tools, resources and training on best practices so that our Party remains protected and vigilant."

Agents similarly spoke to Democratic parties in several states, a Democratic National Committee official said. "The DNC and state parties have been in contact with the FBI," the official said. "There is no evidence that any systems have been compromised."

The FBI declined to comment.

**What they did**

**A National Security Agency memo this month said the Chinese hackers scanned more than 100 U.S. state-level political party domains altogether.** The memo said the hackers are suspected to be the group formerly known as APT 1. In 2013, cybersecurity firm Mandiant [publicly revealed the existence of the espionage outfit](#), its connections to the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the fact that it had stolen hundreds of terabytes worth of data from at least 141 companies.

The political party domains were scanned "likely so the PRC cyber actor could build a target network for possible future operations," the NSA said in its memo. An FBI notice said the hackers' effort appeared centered on obtaining additional sub-domains to help build that network.

**Party organizations whose domains the Chinese hackers scanned should audit their network logs and logins, the FBI recommended. They also should make sure their systems have been patched. Not the first time**

Government-backed hackers have a history of targeting U.S. political campaigns.

Chinese government hackers in the past have compromised presidential campaign systems to conduct political espionage. In 2008, [according to U.S. intelligence officials](#), they infiltrated the computer networks of the campaigns of **Barack Obama** and **John McCain**, looking for information that, for instance, might shed light on the campaigns' positions on China.

In 2015 and 2016, Russian cyberspies [hacked the Democratic National Committee](#) and **Hillary Clinton's** presidential campaign for espionage and to interfere in the election. They also hacked into [Republican state political campaign arms](#), FBI Director **James B. Comey** said in 2017.

**With less than a month until midterm elections**, U.S. officials are not seeing any signs of active threats by foreign governments to election-related networks.

"We are seeing obviously a number of different actors that continue to operate in terms of influence," U.S. Cyber Command and NSA chief Gen. **Paul Nakasone** said at [a Council on Foreign Relations event](#) last week. "We are seeing no significant indications of attacks that are being planned right now."

As the 2016 presidential race showed, hackers can release stolen information from political parties in an attempt to embarrass their victims.

“Political parties are excellent sources of intelligence on developing policy and they’ve been targeted for that purpose by cyberespionage actors for some time, but as foreign election interference has become commonplace, the risk is no longer just quiet spy work,” said **John Hultquist**, vice president of threat intelligence at Mandiant. When successful, “intrusions like these can be leveraged in hack-and-leak activity designed to manipulate the democratic process.”

#### Other Chinese efforts

**Separately, China has stepped up attempts to sway U.S. voters in the midterms**, cybersecurity company Recorded Future’s Insikt Group [concluded in a report](#) last week.

#### Advertisement

- “We’ve noticed an increase in China’s state-sponsored influencers, such as ‘wolf warrior’ diplomats, political pundits, and inauthentic accounts, attempting to influence US voters,” **Craig Terson**, director of Insikt Group’s global issues team, said via email. “This cycle, China’s influencers are actively conducting malign influence operations campaigns against the 2022 elections, which signifies a shift in tactics from previous US elections, where China’s influencers were less active in attempts to influence US voters.”
- More from Terson: “While we’ve seen China attempt to influence voters, we have seen only limited attempts for China to directly interfere with the midterm elections (whereby an agent from the Ministry of State Security [hired a private investigator](#) to interfere in the congressional election bid of a candidate). We expect operations to continue at a similar pace as a result, particularly as China’s influence efforts generally seek to change perspectives over the longer term rather than immediately impact decision-making.”

**Hackers, physical threats against election workers, insiders gaining unauthorized access to election equipment and influence operations are making the election threat environment “more complex than it has ever been,”** Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency Director **Jen Easterly** told reporters last week in a briefing about efforts to protect the midterms.

“The security challenges are intertwined,” she said. “They can’t be viewed in isolation when you think about foreign interference. In many cases, the threat actors who are attempting to breach our election systems are the same ones who are conducting influence operations that seek to sow discord in our country.”

China has denied past U.S. accusations of malfeasance in cyberspace, saying the United States has instead [victimized its country](#) with cyberattacks.

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## Terrorism, Extremism

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HEADLINE	10/17 Canadian jailed 20yrs: recruiting for IS
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-10-17/canadian-sentenced-for-recruiting-islamic-state-fighters-syria">https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-10-17/canadian-sentenced-for-recruiting-islamic-state-fighters-syria</a>
GIST	<p>SAN DIEGO — A Canadian national who lived in Southern California was sentenced to 20 years in U.S. prison on Monday for helping at least a half-dozen Canadians and Americans join Islamic State in Syria in 2013 and 2014 — including the first known American to die fighting for the militant organization.</p> <p>Abdullahi Ahmed Abdullahi directly funded “violent acts of terrorism,” including the kidnapping and killing of people in Syria, U.S. Atty. Randy Grossman said in a statement.</p>

Abdullahi acknowledged in a plea agreement that he helped a resident of San Diego, Douglas McAuthor McCain, join IS. McCain [was killed in Syria](#) while fighting alongside IS fighters against Syrian opposition forces in 2014.

Prosecutors also said Abdullahi provided money to send an 18-year-old cousin from Minneapolis to join IS fighters in Syria, as well as three other cousins from Edmonton, Canada.

The men all died in combat, according to the U.S. government.

Abdullahi was detained by Canadian authorities in 2017 and extradited to the U.S. two years later. He pleaded guilty to providing material support to terrorists in 2021.

He also admitted to robbing an Edmonton jewelry store in January 2014 to raise money to fund the foreign fighters. Weeks after committing that robbery, Abdullahi sent money to McCain so he could go to Syria.

McCain's brother, [Marchello McCain](#), was sentenced in 2018 to 10 years in U.S. federal prison for making false statements during several interviews with federal agents from 2014 to 2015, including denying knowing that his brother planned to fight for IS. He told the FBI that he thought his brother was going to Turkey to play music and teach English.

The U.S. announced earlier this month it killed three IS leaders [in two separate operations](#), including a rare ground raid in a part of northeast Syria under government control.

Despite its defeat in Syria in 2019, when IS lost the last sliver of land its fighters once controlled, the extremists' sleeper cells have continued to carry out deadly attacks in Syria and Iraq. IS fighters once held large parts of the two countries.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 US sanctions 14 for al Shabab ties</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/us-puts-sanctions-al-shabaab-financial-facilitator-network-2022-10-17/">https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/us-puts-sanctions-al-shabaab-financial-facilitator-network-2022-10-17/</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON, Oct 17 (Reuters) - The U.S. government on Monday imposed sanctions on 14 men, including six it said were part of a network that has engaged in weapons procurement, financial facilitation and recruitment for the al Shabaab militant Islamist group.</p> <p>"Treasury is focused on identifying and disrupting al Shabaab's illicit networks operating in Eastern Africa," Brian Nelson, the Treasury's under secretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, said in a statement. "We will continue to take action against the weapons smuggling and fundraising activities of al Shabaab and other (al Qaeda) affiliates."</p> <p>The Treasury named the six as Abdullahi Jeeri, Khalif Adale, Hassan Afgooye, Abdikarim Hussein Gagaale, Abdi Samad and Abdirahman Nurey. All were designated under Executive Order 13224, which targets terrorist groups and their supporters.</p> <p>It also sanctioned three men - Mohamed Hussein Salad, Ahmed Hasan Ali Sulaiman Mataan and Mohamed Ali Badaas - under the same executive order, accusing them of being part of an al Shabaab smuggling and weapons trafficking network in Yemen.</p> <p>Lastly, Treasury said the State Department had designated five individuals who hold leadership roles within al Shabaab: Mohamed Mire, Yasir Jiis, Yusuf Ahmed Hajji Nurow, Mustaf 'Ato, and Mohamoud Abdi Aden, again under the same executive order.</p> <p>As a result of the designations, all property of the people targeted falling under U.S. jurisdiction must be blocked and reported to the Treasury's Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC). OFAC regulations generally bar U.S. persons from dealing with those designated, and carrying out some transactions with them can also expose non-U.S. persons to sanction.</p>

HEADLINE	<b>10/17 Mali: bomb blast kills 3 UN peacekeepers</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/peacekeepers-die-mali-roadside-bomb-attack-91629838">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/peacekeepers-die-mali-roadside-bomb-attack-91629838</a>
GIST	<p>BAMAKO, Mali -- Three U.N. peacekeepers from Chad have been killed in northern Mali after a roadside bomb exploded as the men approached on foot and several others were seriously wounded, officials said Monday.</p> <p>Their deaths come just one day before the U.N. Security Council is holding a meeting on the mission in Mali, which was the United Nations' most dangerous even before the French military pulled its remaining troops from the country in August.</p> <p>U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said three other peacekeepers were seriously wounded and are receiving treatment in a U.N. hospital.</p> <p>"This is obviously the latest incident in what is already a very challenging environment for U.N. peacekeeping," Dujarric said in New York. "This year already, 12 U.N. peacekeepers were killed in Mali in hostile acts."</p> <p>The peacekeepers were on a mine search and detection patrol at the time, Dujarric said. Another official in Mali, who spoke on condition of anonymity as they are not allowed to speak to journalists, said the peacekeepers had dismounted and began to advance on foot with a mine detector when the device exploded.</p> <p>The explosion Monday took place 10 kilometers (6 miles) from the town of Tessalit in Kidal region. Islamic extremists are known to place improvised explosive devices in the area, the official said.</p> <p>"The modus operandi is new because we have the impression that the device is not only remotely controlled, but that whoever activated it has visual contact with the peacekeepers," the official said. "Was this visual contact made through a civilian drone? We don't know at the moment."</p> <p>The attack has not been claimed but bears the hallmarks of armed groups linked to al-Qaida.</p> <p>A French-led military operation forced the Islamic extremists from power in the towns of northern Mali back in 2013. But the jihadis regrouped in the surrounding desert and have launched scores of attacks on the Malian military and U.N. peacekeepers in the years since.</p> <p>Security concerns across the country have only deepened since the French military withdrew its troops from Mali. France's decision to move its forces to neighboring Niger came after relations sharply deteriorated with Mali's junta leader, Col. Assimi Goita, who seized power in an August 2020 coup.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Report: Taliban kill captives in restive area</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/report-taliban-killed-captives-restive-afghan-province-91660885">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/report-taliban-killed-captives-restive-afghan-province-91660885</a>
GIST	<p>ISLAMABAD, Pakistan -- The Taliban captured, bound and shot to death 27 men in Afghanistan's Panjshir Valley last month during an offensive against resistance fighters in the area, according to a report published Tuesday, refuting the group's earlier claims that the men were killed in battle.</p> <p>One video of the killings verified by the report shows five men, blindfolded with their hands tied behind their backs. Then, Taliban fighters spray them with gunfire for 20 seconds and cry out in celebration.</p> <p>The investigation by Afghan Witness, an open-source project run by the U.K.-based non-profit Center for Information Resilience, is a rare verification of allegations that the Taliban have used brutal methods against opposition forces and their supporters, its researchers said. Since taking power in August 2021, the</p>

Taliban have imposed a tighter and harsher rule, even as they press for international recognition of their government.

David Osborn, the team leader of Afghan Witness, said the report gives the "most clear-cut example" of the Taliban carrying out an "orchestrated purge" of resistance fighters.

Afghan Witness said it analyzed dozens of visual sources from social media — mostly videos and photographs — to conclusively link one group of Taliban fighters to the killings of 10 men in the Dara District of Panjshir, including the five seen being mowed down in the video.

It said it also confirmed 17 other extrajudicial killings from further images on social media, all showing dead men with their hands tied behind their backs. Videos and photos of Taliban fighters with the bodies aided geolocation and chrono-location, also providing close-ups of the fighters at the scene. These were cross-referenced with other videos suspected to feature the group.

"Using open-source techniques we have established the facts around the summary and systematic execution of a group of men in the Panjshir Valley in mid-September," Osborn said. "At the time of their execution, the detained were bound, posing no threat to their Taliban captors."

Enayatullah Khawarazmi, the Taliban-appointed spokesman for the defense minister, said a delegation is investigating the videos released on social media. He said he was unable to give further details as the investigation is ongoing.

Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesman for the Taliban-run government, was not immediately available for comment.

Last month, Mujahid was reported as saying the Taliban had killed 40 resistance fighters and captured more than 100 in Panjshir. He gave no details on how the 40 men died.

The force fighting in the mountainous Panjshir Valley north of Kabul — a remote region that has defied conquerors before — rose out of the last remnants of Afghanistan's shattered security forces. It has vowed to resist the Taliban after they overran the country and seized power in August 2021.

Ali Maisam Nazary, head of foreign relations at the National Resistance Front for Afghanistan, said: "The Taliban committed war crimes by killing POWs that surrendered to them point blank and the videos are evidence of this."

Afghan Witness said it has credible evidence of a further 30 deaths due to last month's Taliban offensive against alleged resistance fighters in Panjshir.

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## Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	10/17 Dog took solo bus trips to the park
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2022/10/17/seattle-dog-that-rode-buse-alone-dies/10523673002/">https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2022/10/17/seattle-dog-that-rode-buse-alone-dies/10523673002/</a>
GIST	<p>Eclipse, a dog who gained notoriety for riding Seattle's city bus alone, died in her sleep on Friday, according to her <a href="#">owner-run Facebook account</a>. She was 10 years old.</p> <p>The big red bus with three doors had been a fixture of Eclipse's daily routine for years, owner Jeff Young told USA TODAY. Several green and yellow buses stopped right outside of Young's apartment, but Eclipse knew to take the red one to the dog park in Belltown because she had done it "a million times," Young said. He adopted Eclipse when she was just 10 weeks old.</p>



	<p>In 2015, the black lab-bullmastiff mix dog began commuting without Young two to three times a week after sneaking on the bus alone while Young was smoking a cigarette. Eclipse knew exactly where to get off the bus by looking out the window, Young said. Eclipse would hop off the bus and "fly" straight to the dog park about a block and a half away.</p> <p>"She would break off whatever conversation she was having or whatever interaction, jump down, go to the back door and start banging on the glass," Young said.</p> <p>And since that first solo ride in 2015, Young had to keep a closer eye on Eclipse.</p> <p>"The celebrity kind of got out of hand," Young said.</p> <p>Young said Eclipse has been his "best friend" for the last 11 years.</p> <p>"Missing her doesn't even cover it," he said.</p> <p>Young said that while all people say their pets are special, Eclipse really was, to him. Eclipse was diagnosed with cancerous tumors prior to her passing, Young <a href="#">said</a>.</p> <p>"Even on bad days, I could turn over and look at her and it never did seem so bad."</p> <p>Eclipse rode the King County Metro, which paid tribute to the dog on its Twitter page.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 Study: West wildfires fuel extreme weather</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/17/wildfires-us-west-extreme-weather-central-states">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/17/wildfires-us-west-extreme-weather-central-states</a>
GIST	<p>Images showing thick clouds of wildfire smoke drifting thousands of miles away have become commonplace in the US in recent years as the country's western states battle megablazes with increasing frequency. But a new study from US Department of Energy suggests the harmful impact of those behemoth blazes may extend much further.</p> <p>The <a href="#">new study</a>, published by the department's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, for the first time links extreme hail, dangerous deluges, and the growing risk of flash floods in states like Colorado, Wyoming, Oklahoma and Nebraska to the growing intensity of wildfires in the west.</p> <p>As fire season in the west stretches longer, sparking threats earlier in the year, big blazes are increasingly coinciding with storm formations in other states, the research showed.</p> <p>"Western wildfires significantly increase the intensity of severe storms over the central United States," said Dr Jiwen Fan, an earth scientist at the lab. "This is the first study where we are really showing that wildfires can have a significant impact on the downstream weather."</p> <p>Fan's team studied how the heat and airborne particles released by wildfires impact weather patterns elsewhere.</p> <p>The high levels of heat produced by fires can shift air pressure in the atmosphere, which creates strong winds that flow toward the east, Fan explained. Those gusts are able to deliver particles from the fires' billowing smoke and more atmospheric moisture. Together, these conditions amplify storms already brewing in those areas.</p> <p>Fan's team found, for example, that wildfires help form larger hail.</p> <p>Collecting more cooled water the hailstones grow larger and larger the more time they spend aloft, the study notes. The hardened precipitation has the potential to damage infrastructure and crops and pose dangers to people who aren't prepared, the scientists warn.</p>



When wildfires become bigger and more frequent the heat impact will be stronger, Fan said, making it more likely they shift the intensity of already forming meteorological conditions.

The study presents a warning to central states already challenged by the impact of climate crisis. “The cost of the storms we studied exceeded \$100m in damage,” said Yuwei Zhang, one of the authors of the study. “If we know that distant wildfires contribute to stronger storms, that information could bring about better projections, which might help avoid some degree of destruction.”

The findings also serve as yet another call to mitigate the rising risks from megafires and invest in strategies that will lessen fire intensity, including reducing the desiccated overgrown vegetation that fuels their growth.

Still, the climate crisis has set the stage for more ferocious fires, as spiking temperatures bake more moisture out of already parched landscapes, and an increase in devastating infernos is expected as the world warms.

Scientists have found that the fires are escalating the effects, creating a feedback loop that will continue to turn up the dial. [Climate crisis](#) is expected to produce more hazardous weather and these conditions could compound more catastrophes.

“There has been a perception that wildfires are predominantly a problem of the western US,” said Dr Michael Jerrett, chair of the Department of Environmental Health Sciences at the University of [California](#), Los Angeles. But their far-reaching effects have been clearly established, he argued.

“What we are seeing is an increasing impact in the midwest and even as far away as New York City, where they are having smog events that are fueled by wildfires happening in the western US,” he said, noting that the blazes contribute to a rise in chronic conditions like lung disease, heart disease and diabetes across the country.

“There’s now an increasing impact at very distant locations of these wildfires on air quality and we are seeing that it is really continental in scope now,” he said. “We know that is going to cost lives.”

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HEADLINE	10/17 How much has climate changed already?
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/science-trending-news-climate-and-environment-00343ecd98497103ce9582110c1202f6">https://apnews.com/article/science-trending-news-climate-and-environment-00343ecd98497103ce9582110c1202f6</a>
GIST	<p>Relentless drought in <a href="#">China</a>, <a href="#">East Africa</a>, <a href="#">the U.S. West and northern Mexico</a>, devastating floods in <a href="#">Pakistan</a> and <a href="#">Kentucky</a>, scorching heat waves in <a href="#">Europe</a> and the <a href="#">Pacific Northwest</a>, destructive <a href="#">cyclones in southern Africa</a> and <a href="#">intense hurricanes</a> in the U.S. and Central America make up just some of the recent extreme weather events that <a href="#">scientists have long predicted</a> would be more intense with a warming climate.</p> <p>“With just over one degree of warming since pre-industrial times, we are already seeing more extreme weather patterns,” said Elizabeth Robinson, director of the Grantham Research Institute in London.</p> <p>Scientists have been tracking precisely how much the climate has already changed due to human activity. Temperatures around the world have been inching upwards.</p> <p>The average global temperature today, which tends to be compared to estimates for the pre-industrial era that kickstarted the mass burning of fossil fuels, has shot up between 0.9 and 1.2 degrees Celsius (1.6 to 2 degrees Fahrenheit) since 1850, in large part due to human activity, according to estimates in the most recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Most of that warming has happened from 1975 onwards, at a rate of 0.15 Celsius (0.27 Fahrenheit) to 0.2 Celsius (0.36 Fahrenheit) per decade.</p>

Most people are living in areas that have heated up more than the global average, “partly that is urbanization — people move into cities, which are urban heat islands — and partly populations growing,” Robinson said. Urban areas, packed with plenty of heat-absorbing infrastructure like roads and buildings and less cooling tree cover, become “islands” of warmer weather.

Sea levels, which have swelled due to both warming, expanding oceans and the melting of ice over land, have also been jumping up more rapidly. In the twentieth century, seas were rising by about 1.4 millimeters (0.06 inches) a year, but that’s doubled to 3.6 millimeters a year (0.14 inches) in the past fifteen years, data suggests. Seas have risen by about 21 to 24 centimeters (8 to 9 inches) so far since 1880 on average, according to estimates, with the IPCC suggesting this will likely be up to 43 to 84 centimeters (17 to 33 inches) by 2100.

While the climate and global temperatures have fluctuated throughout the Earth’s history, it is the rate of change that is most alarming to researchers. Fossil fuels — made up of ancient decomposing plants and animals deep in the earth — have been dug up at extraordinary rates. Scientists are now starting to pinpoint “details about rates and magnitudes and timing of changes” as well as the varying impact on regions, said Brown University climate scientist Kim Cobb.

With the planet already facing the effects of climate change, adapting to hazards is one major way humans can limit the damage. Weather-related disaster deaths are generally trending lower globally as forecasts, preparedness and resilience improves, scientists say.

“The extent to which people are harmed by an extreme weather event is strongly influenced by government policies,” Robinson said, but added that “there are limits to adaptation.”

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HEADLINE	10/17 ‘Breeding ground’ intensifying hurricanes
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/us-atlantic-coast-breeding-ground-rapidly-intensifying-hurricanes/story?id=91593884">https://abcnews.go.com/US/us-atlantic-coast-breeding-ground-rapidly-intensifying-hurricanes/story?id=91593884</a>
GIST	<p>The East Coast of the U.S. will need to brace for more devastating storms like <a href="#">hurricanes Fiona</a> and <a href="#">Ian</a> should the global reliance on fossil fuels remain business as usual, scientists are warning.</p> <p>Warming temperatures around the world are the root contributor that will cause more storm systems to behave like Fiona and Ian, with increased moisture and the likelihood of rapid intensification as they head toward land, according to a study published in <a href="#">Geophysical Research Letters</a> on Monday.</p> <p>This will make the Atlantic Coast of the U.S. a "breeding ground" for rapidly intensifying hurricanes, the researchers said.</p> <p>Scientists at the Department of Energy's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory studied data over the past four decades of hurricane activity and the conditions that shaped them and found that the rates at which hurricanes strengthen near the U.S. Atlantic Coast have significantly climbed since 1979.</p> <p>The direct observations made by the researchers showed that the increase was "very likely due to climate change," Karthik Balaguru, a climate scientist at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and author of the study, told ABC News.</p> <p>The trend will likely continue if the current level of greenhouse gas emissions continues around the world, according to the study.</p> <p>A mix of environmental conditions caused by a unique phenomenon along the Atlantic Coast makes it more conducive to hurricane development, Balaguru said.</p> <p>Land is already generally warmer than ocean waters. Still, as greenhouse gases build and global temperatures rise, land is heating up much more rapidly, and the ocean and the difference in temperature</p>

between land and ocean continue to grow, Balaguru said. The increase in the temperature difference between the land and the sea can create stronger storms, he added.

"Unlike the ocean with unlimited water supply, there's much less water in soil," Ruby Leung, an atmospheric scientist at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, said in a statement. "That means the land can't evaporate as much as water, so it can't get rid of the extra heat trapped by greenhouse gases as quickly as the ocean."

The same mix of hurricane-favoring conditions doesn't appear in the Gulf of Mexico but could form in other regions, including those near the East Asian coastline and the northwest Arabian Sea, the researchers said.

Combined with warmer ocean waters and greater atmospheric humidity, these conditions allow the storm systems to jump multiple [storm categories](#) in a short amount of time, according to the study. And because of the speed of the strengthening, the storms can often elude meteorological predictions, even with modern-day technology, the researchers said.

Last month, Hurricane Fiona caused widespread destruction in Puerto Rico -- five years after Hurricane Maria wiped out much of the island's infrastructure. Just 10 days later, Hurricane Ian did the same to southwest Florida, completely [decimating Sanibel Island and Fort Myers Beach](#) with deadly storm surge and catastrophic winds. Both storm systems strengthened into powerful Category 4 hurricanes before landfall.

Damage from weather and climate disasters could exceed \$100 billion by the time 2022 comes to a close, the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) announced last week.

A study published in Nature in January found that [annual costs of flooding alone](#) in the U.S. could climb by 26% to \$40.6 billion by 2050 as a result of climate change.

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## Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	10/17 Mayor resurrects gunfire detection system?
SOURCE	<a href="https://publicola.com/2022/10/17/harrells-budget-would-resurrect-rejected-gunfire-detection-system/">https://publicola.com/2022/10/17/harrells-budget-would-resurrect-rejected-gunfire-detection-system/</a>
GIST	<p>Earlier this year, with the city facing a budget gap of more than \$140 million, Mayor Bruce Harrell asked all city departments to come up with potential budget cuts ranging from 3 to 6 percent. His proposed 2023 budget implements some of those cuts, reducing the budgets for the Human Services Department, the Office of Labor Standards, the Department of Neighborhoods, and the Office of Emergency Management, among others.</p> <p>But one department remains sacrosanct: The Seattle Police Department, whose budget is set to swell substantially despite a well-documented glut of vacant, but still funded, positions. The bulk of that growth will come from re-absorbing city's parking enforcement officers (moved to the Seattle Department of Transportation last year as part of an effort to civilianize some police jobs) into the department.</p> <p>In addition, SPD will use \$16 million in paper savings achieved by not funding some vacant positions to pay for a wide array of new investments, including a new acoustic gunfire detection system to "provide the police department with evidence collection capabilities for use in homicide investigations or other incidents involving firearms," according to the budget. Setting up the system would cost the city \$2 million over the next two years. But the plan will face opposition from many on the city council, who argue that the system will do little to increase prosecutions or decrease gun violence in Seattle.</p> <p>Gunfire detection systems, typically shorthanded as "Shotspotter" for the name of the company that dominates the market, consist of an array of highly sensitive microphones and sensors mounted on street</p>

lights or other elevated structures throughout an area,. These sensors, which are sometimes augmented with cameras, detect and determine the approximate location of outdoor sounds that resemble gunfire and alert human “acoustic experts” who listen to the sounds and filter out false alarms like fireworks and backfiring vehicles. These experts then alert police, who can be dispatched to the scene.

“This technology allows our evidence gatherers to determine where the shots are fired and ... go right to where it was; perhaps there would be a car speeding away,” Harrell said. “Cities across the country have used this technology as an evidence gathering tool, not a violence prevention tool. And it’s been effective.”

If that argument sounds familiar, that’s because some Seattle officials have been making it for more than a decade. Both Harrell and former mayor Mike McGinn presented a [virtually identical case for Shotspotter in 2012](#) when they [pushed](#), unsuccessfully, for the city to fund a gunfire locator system.

But ample real-world evidence, then and now, shows that gunfire detection systems have little impact on gun violence investigations and do not reduce gun-related crime. A large [study](#) published last year in the Journal of Urban Health, for example, looked at gun homicides, murder arrests, and weapons arrests in 68 large, metropolitan counties that used Shotspotter between 1999 and 2016. The system, the study concluded, had “no significant impact on firearm-related homicides or arrest outcomes.”

A [2016 report from](#) the City Auditor’s Office backed up this finding, noting that “there has been little research to date on the efficacy of acoustic gunshot locator systems for reducing gun crime. ... Moreover, although a few available studies have found that acoustic gunshot locator systems can result in slightly faster response times by police, there is no evidence that these small gains in police response times have had a deterrent effect or have led to increased apprehension of offenders.”

That report was addressed to then-city council public safety committee chair Tim Burgess (now Harrell’s chief public safety advisor), who sought funding for Shotspotter over multiple budget cycles.

In Chicago, a [review of Shotspotter](#) deployment by the city’s Office of the Inspector General found that police found evidence of a gun-related crime in fewer than one out of every 10 dispatches based on a Shotspotter alert. According to Shotspotter, that report was flawed because it isn’t always possible to gather evidence. “Linking an alert with evidence of a shooting can be challenging as some guns do not eject casings and those that do can eject haphazardly. In addition, a high number of alerts happen late at night making evidence collection difficult as well as engaging witnesses,” they added.

Those arguments, however, apply equally to any gunfire-related dispatch; the issue the Chicago report was raising was the use of Shotspotter to determine how police resources are directed. Moreover, the “no-casings” argument is dubious; the only kind of commonly purchased guns that do not release casings are revolvers, which—according to the US Bureau of [Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms](#)—make up just 9 percent of US guns sales.

Still, Shotspotter is still in use in Chicago and many other cities—a clear sign, the spokesperson said, that it’s working. “The Chicago Police Department consistently describes ShotSpotter as an important part of their operations,” the spokesperson said.

Other studies have shown that Shotspotter can have unintended consequences unrelated to the system’s ability to locate potential gunfire. Critics point to the potential for racially biased policing and an excessive police presence in communities of color. The Chicago report found that in some cases, officers used the mere presence of a gunshot detection system in an area to justify stopping a person on the street—suggesting that police are on heightened alert in the neighborhoods where the system is deployed.

According to ACLU of Washington Technology & Liberty project manager Jennifer Lee, gunfire detection systems “exacerbate disproportionate policing of communities of color and send police disproportionately into neighborhoods that are already overpoliced.”

Notably, Harrell's budget says he proposed the system in response to requests from "community liaisons"—"mothers who have been directly impacted by gun violence"—to provide "an 'equal level of service'" in all neighborhoods. "This group made recommendations in favor of the gunfire detection system technology referencing multiple unsolved homicides in Seattle's Rainier Beach area," according to Harrell's budget.

The Shotspotter representative said there is no data to suggest that ShotSpotter "puts police on high alert or creates dangerous situations any more than their response to 911 calls. Rather, ShotSpotter equips police officers with more information than they might typically have when arriving to the scene of a gunshot incident, and they arrive at the scene more situationally aware."

Other potential unintended consequences include a reduction in 911 calls and an increase in active-shooter alerts at schools, which can lead to traumatic lockdowns. In St. Louis, the number of 911 calls declined dramatically after the city installed Shotspotter "without a corresponding decrease in actual gun incidents," according to a [city council analysis](#). And in Washington D.C., Shotspotter detected 249 possible gun-related incidents near schools during a single year, with the neighborhoods surrounding a small number of schools accounting for a disproportionate number of those alerts.

Any other gunfire detection system, especially one that includes cameras, would probably to undergo mandatory review under the city's [surveillance ordinance](#), which lays out a lengthy approval process for any new surveillance technology. By seeking \$1 million for the technology next year, the ACLU's Lee says, Harrell is tying up money that could be spent on other, proven gun-violence mitigation programs.

"The first step from the mayor's office should have been to publicly review the technology, draft a surveillance impact report, solicit comments, and seek council approval to see if a budget allocation would even be appropriate," Lee said. "That money will just sit there in the budget and not be used for actually effective things that have an actual impact on violence."

Lee said the ACLU is concerned, [among other issues](#), with the potential chilling effect produced by the presence of dozens or hundreds of microphones, and potentially cameras, in Seattle neighborhoods. Gunfire detection technology can also "pick up conversations and sounds that are not gunshots ... that can be combined with other information to form an intimate picture of people's lives. People might not feel comfortable participating in things like protests, associating with people, going to practicing their religion, freely going to health care clinics, or just gathering in public places."

If that seems far-fetched, it's worth recalling that Seattle has a recent history of monitoring people in public spaces, including years of anti-loitering, surveillance, and "drug market" initiatives in the Central District and the [installation](#) of surveillance cameras throughout downtown Seattle.

The Shotspotter spokesperson said the company's system only records sound when it's triggered by potential gunfire, and that "any sounds picked up by sensors are stored for only 30 hours and then overwritten. Audio of an incident that is sent to ShotSpotter's Incident Review Center for further analysis is limited to short "snippets" which include the few seconds of gunfire and one second before and after to establish an ambient noise level," the spokesperson said.

During last week's council discussion of the proposal, public safety committee chair Lisa Herbold said she would prefer to spend money on targeted gun-violence prevention programs for people under 25, like the Regional Peacekeepers Collective, to older people who make up a growing percentage of both the victims and perpetrators of gun violence. "That intervention is really focused on making sure that people who are hurt do not continue to hurt other people," Herbold said.

Councilmember Sara Nelson said it was worth funding Shotspotter even if it only "saved [a single] life by allowing an officer to respond more quickly. I think that if any of us were the loved one of that person, we would be happy that we are spending \$1 million on this, because life is precious and priceless." A [2021 study](#) of victim outcomes in Hartford, Connecticut found that Shotspotter did not correlate with better outcomes for gunshot wound victims, such as speedier responses or a lower death rate, although



	<p>Shotspotter contends that the technology has “consistently found gunshot victims when no one calls 911 and that has led [cities] to find victims and provide lifesaving aid.”</p> <p>Shotspotter, Nelson added, is something SPD has asked for, and would be “just another tool in our toolbox to address an issue that is not getting any better, it is only getting worse.”</p> <p>The council could cut funding for the system and use it for something else; pay for staff to come up with a plan and create a request for proposals on an “aggressive schedule” while cutting \$325,000 for an analysis of the future proposal; or fund the plan in its entirety. Tomorrow, October 18, is the deadline for council members to propose their initial budget amendments.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 Busted: criminal ring hacked keyless cars</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/police-dismantles-criminal-ring-that-hacked-keyless-cars/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/police-dismantles-criminal-ring-that-hacked-keyless-cars/</a>
GIST	<p>Authorities from France, Latvia, and Spain arrested 31 suspects believed to be part of a car theft ring that targeted vehicles from two French car manufacturers.</p> <p>The criminals only targeted cars that use keyless entry and start systems and stole them after exploiting their keyless technology to unlock the doors and start the engines without having to use the key fobs.</p> <p>To do that, they used a fraudulent tool promoted online as an automotive diagnostic solution to replace the stolen cars' software and bypass the vehicles' keyless system to enter and steal them.</p> <p>The cyberspace command of the French National Gendarmerie (FNG) also seized the domain for the fraudulent software used to hack the cars' keyless tech. Still, Europol's press release doesn't mention the URL of the website or the domain where it was hosted.</p> <p>"As a result of a coordinated action carried out on 10 October in the three countries involved, 31 suspects were arrested. A total of 22 locations were searched, and over EUR 1 098 500 in criminal assets seized," Europol <a href="#">said</a>.</p> <p>"Among those arrested feature the software developers, its resellers and the car thieves who used this tool to steal vehicles."</p> <p>While Europol didn't provide any details on how the attacks managed to hack the keyless vehicles, remote keyless entry (RKE) systems are vulnerable to various there are</p> <p>The investigation was started by the French Gendarmerie's Cybercrime Centre (C3N), with the French authorities also opening a case at Eurojust in September 2022.</p> <p>The European Union judicial cooperation agency facilitated the cross-border judicial coordination between the French, Latvian, and Spanish national authorities involved in the joint operation.</p> <p>Europol has also supported the investigation since March 2022 by providing intelligence and analysis support to the countries targeted by this criminal ring.</p> <p>BleepingComputer reached out to Europol requesting more information but did not receive a reply before this article was published.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/17 IG: unemployment money for drugs, guns</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/17/inspector-general-says-unemployment-money-was-spent/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/17/inspector-general-says-unemployment-money-was-spent/</a>
GIST	Criminal syndicates that scammed the unemployment system out of billions of dollars in pandemic benefits used some of the money to buy drugs and guns, an inspector general says.

The Labor Department's watchdog said nearly 20% of the unemployment insurance benefits that California paid out over the first six months of the pandemic went to fraudulent claims.

"Criminal enterprises have discovered that UI fraud is a low-risk, high-reward crime," the inspector general said. "They have invested fraudulent UI proceeds to further other criminal activity, such as purchasing guns and drugs."

The office, reached by The Washington Times, declined to elaborate on those crimes but did point to Justice Department prosecutions.

Among those was a case against the Robles Park gang in Tampa, Florida, where members admitted to a toxic mix of drug dealing, shootouts and unemployment benefit fraud. Gang members filed dozens of claims using stolen identities and walked away with more than \$420,000 in payouts that prosecutors suggested fueled the gang's broader mayhem.

Authorities also brought charges in federal court in Brooklyn, New York, against 11 members of the Woo gang. They accused the gang of filing bogus unemployment applications using more than 800 stolen identities and walking off with more than \$4 million in payouts.

Gang members bragged about the scam on social media, flashing stacks of cash.

The Washington Times reached out to the inspector general for other details, but the office declined and pointed to the Justice Department's publicly announced cases.

The exact amount of pandemic aid that went to the wrong people may never be known, but investigators are increasingly drawing connections between criminal outfits and massive amounts of cash.

One particularly troubling aspect is the money stolen by criminal syndicates operating outside the U.S.

The inspector general at the Small Business Administration, which is probing that agency's two big pandemic programs, recently reported on \$1.3 billion in Economic Injury Disaster Loan payments that went to applicants who filed from internet connections outside the U.S.

While not automatically improper, those foreign locations raised red flags, the inspector general said.

"The numerous applications submitted from foreign IP addresses are an indication of potential fraud that may involve international criminal organizations. OIG has ongoing investigations into international organized crime operations that applied for and stole pandemic relief funds," investigators said.

Given the prevalence of America's adversaries among foreign criminal outfits operating online, analysts say U.S. taxpayers might have funded Russian or Iranian-backed operations.

The pandemic programs were particularly susceptible to fraud because of how Congress and the Trump administration wrote and implemented the programs.

With shutdowns threatening to send the economy into a depression, the government decided that speed in getting money out the door was more important than accuracy in who collected it.

Full tallies of bogus payments may never be known, but investigators keep turning up brazen examples of fraud.

The Labor Department inspector general identified one address — a three-bedroom house — where more than 90 unemployment benefit claims were delivered. One person filed for 235 claims across three states and received payment on 87 of them — all in California.



The person collected \$1.6 million before California stopped payments, 164 days after it made the first one.

The pandemic unemployment benefits were funded by the federal government but administered by the states, adding to their usual unemployment benefits.

States simply weren't prepared, and scammers had good luck overall.

The inspector general's investigators did a deep dive on 214 claims in the four target states, totaling \$3.4 million in payments. They concluded that 118, or \$1.4 million, shouldn't have been paid. Of those, 25 were figured to be cases of actual fraud, totaling \$465,723.

The audit extrapolated across the entire \$71.7 billion in payments to 9.5 million people in the four states during that time. It worked out to 5.3 million improper payments totaling \$30.4 billion. Of those, 1.1 million were likely fraudulent, totaling \$9.9 billion.

In another test, they identified 951 claims filed across 28 states that showed signs of identity fraud. States stopped 495 of the claims, or just 52%.

Among the fraudulent claims that weren't stopped, the average payout was roughly \$15,500.

In its response to the inspector general's report, the Labor Department objected to using the 214 cases as a measure of overall fraud. The agency said the sample size was too small and questioned whether the investigators properly categorized cases as bogus.

Brent Parton, acting assistant secretary at the department, said it's not proper to label claims as "likely fraudulent" unless state agencies have investigated them.

"It is inappropriate to publish data that may inaccurately represent the actual [Pandemic Unemployment Assistance] improper payment rate," Mr. Parton wrote in a lengthy rebuttal.

He also pointed to a series of steps the department has taken to encourage states to stiffen controls on unemployment payouts, such as better identity checks.

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HEADLINE	10/18 Crime surged; prison populations plunged
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.foxnews.com/us/crime-surged-prison-populations-plunged-inmates-granted-early-release-courts-backlog-2020">https://www.foxnews.com/us/crime-surged-prison-populations-plunged-inmates-granted-early-release-courts-backlog-2020</a>
GIST	<p><a href="#">Crime has skyrocketed</a> across the country in the last couple of years, most notably violent crimes such as murders. As the country dealt with coronavirus lockdowns that upended society, the protests and riots that erupted in the summer of 2020 and a demoralized police force, data show prison populations also fell that year.</p> <p>"Historic data clearly shows that if we can return to policies of consistent prosecution for low and high-level crimes and return the option of incarceration where it has been removed, we can hope for long-term 'peace dividends,'" Manhattan Institute's director of policing and public safety Hannah Meyers told Fox News Digital. "If our system can again both capture and incapacitate the concentrated but relatively tiny group of career criminals, while deterring other offending with the presence of consistent arrest and prosecution, we can hope to again reduce crime and minimize incarceration."</p> <p>Data show that prison populations dropped in 2020 as federal and state prisons released inmates that year as the coronavirus raged, and government officials worried the close-quarters inmates share could exacerbate the spread.</p> <p>Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) data found that 2020 marked the "largest single year decrease" for the number of people in prison "since the United States began tracking prisoner populations through the</p>

National Prisoner Statistics program in 1926." The data found that there was a 15% decrease across federal and state prisons in 2020 compared to 2019.

Meyers told Fox News Digital to take the 15% decrease figure with a "grain of salt," noting federal data on criminal justice has been spotty since the pandemic and that the BJS data relies on voluntary reporting from state departments of corrections and the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

"But that being said, certainly COVID led to an enormous decrease in incarceration both through decisions made by prosecutors and by judges," Meyers said.

Meyers noted that inmates held at state and federal prisons are serious and repeat offenders with high recidivism rates.

"So, releasing any proportion of this group from prison due to COVID will certainly have resulted in more crime being committed," she said.

Governors across the country announced early releases for prisoners across the country in 2020 as the pandemic raged, and officials worried that the lack of social distancing in prisons could worsen the spread of COVID and put inmates and prison employees at risk.

"To mitigate the effects of the spread of COVID-19 and protect the public health, welfare, and safety, especially of vulnerable workers or incarcerated persons at Maryland prisons, it is necessary and reasonable to implement protocols and procedures for transfer out of the State's correctional institutions," an order from Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, for example, read that year.

Similar to other states, inmates convicted of sexual assault and other violent crimes in Maryland were not eligible for early release.

Fox News Digital spoke with retired NYPD officer and current John Jay adjunct lecturer Jillian Snider, who said many of the incarcerated individuals released due to COVID-19 in 2020 were older and fell outside of the age bracket of individuals who typically commit most crimes.

"If you look at crime statistics overall, the population that most likely commits violent crime is your 18- to 25-year-olds. Those are the ones who are most responsible for violent crime that we see. And that's been a number that's been so consistent ... since criminology became studied in the field. And the population that we were leasing from prisons and jails were actually quite older than that," Snider said.

"I don't really think that there is a strong correlation between the releasing for COVID-related purposes and those individuals subsequently contributing to the current spike, because the data that we have thus far indicates that individuals released on COVID release actually re-offend and recidivate substantially less than individuals who are released through the traditional criminal justice processes," she added.

Violent crimes exploded across the U.S. in 2020, with [murders increasing](#) by nearly 30%, according to FBI data, marking the largest single-year increase in killings since the agency began tracking the crimes. The crime wave continued in 2021, with FBI data showing murders increased another 4.3%. The 2021 data released this month, however, is incomplete and lacks data from nearly 40% of [police departments](#) nationwide, including full reports from New York City and Los Angeles.

Experts who previously spoke to Fox News Digital pointed to a handful of variables that likely contributed to the crime spike that year, including the pandemic and its lockdowns disrupting everyday life, the protests and riots of 2020 following the killing of George Floyd, calls to defund the police, and the Ferguson effect — when police officers pull back as crime drastically increases.

Michael Rempel, director of the Data Collaborative for Justice at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, told Fox News Digital in a phone interview that as of right now, it is not possible to pinpoint if falling prison populations also added to the crime wave.

"I think the accurate answer is we don't know," Rempel said when asked if the BJS data showing a 15% drop in prison populations contributed to crime that year. "When there were so many disruptive events in 2020, that it is hard to pinpoint causality, and certainly no study produced thus far has done so vigorously."

He argued that in addition to the early release of some prisoners during the pandemic, stay-at-home orders in early 2020 prevented people from engaging in criminal behavior, which likely led to a fall in arrests and thus arrest rates and incarceration rates went down.

Meyers said multiple variables can add to a dip in prison populations, such as people not committing as many crimes, less space in prisons to hold inmates, and changes to prosecution policies, such as bail reform.

America began seeing changes to how suspects are prosecuted in 2017, according to Meyers, who said the policies would be "good [and] compassionate" if they did not increase crimes.

"However, data demonstrates that they have increased crime. For example, even before the newly passed SAFE-T legislation in Illinois, Chicago's Chief Judge Timothy Evans instituted bail reform measures in 2017. Within 15 months, the number of felony defendants released without bond doubled, and the jail population fell from 7,443 to 6,000. And this is where we have seen so much fudging and obscuring of data in the last few years in an effort to prove (counter to reality!) that these policies haven't hurt public safety," she wrote in an email to Fox News Digital.

Meyers added that case dismissals have also increased.

"And importantly, there are rising numbers of case dismissals in cities nationwide that spell lower jail populations and also more crime. Some of this is through specific policies enacted by local progressive prosecutors who, for instance, raise the threshold for shoplifting prosecution," Meyers said. "Or though essentially decriminalization, deciding that things like prostitution, resisting arrest, trespassing, etc. will not be prosecuted."

Dismissals have been compounded by "things like NYS's discovery 'reform' statute that passed in 2019."

"It created such an impossibly large amount of material that prosecutors are now required to collect and hand over to defense attorneys that, for most cases, ADAs simply run out of the time they are legally allotted to bring cases, and these cases are automatically dismissed. Prosecutors therefore triage cases. Case dismissals in NYC rose from 44% in 2019 to 69% in 2021 (per NYS court data) largely because of this," Meyers wrote.

The Prison Policy, a Massachusetts-based think tank, reviewed 2020 prison data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics and reported this year that the drop in incarcerated populations was also attributable to a decrease in prison admissions.

The data found a 40% drop in prison admissions and a 16% decrease in jail admissions nationwide in 2020 compared to 2019.

Snider told Fox News Digital that another contributor likely added to the decrease in prison populations: a backlog [at the courts](#) in 2020.

"One thing that could possibly be a contributor and again, not a sole contributor by any means, is we saw such a backlog in the processing system, so not necessarily the individuals who were released for COVID, but individuals who were arrested and pending prosecution for so long, because we did see a real slow down amongst our trial processes because courts are closed," she said.

<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	<p>Snider, who also serves as policy director for R Street's Criminal Justice and Civil Liberties team, said data is "scarce" on such suspects and if they were subsequently convicted.</p> <p>Snider, who said the defund the police movement "made people question the legitimacy of police," argued that cities should put more resources into proactive policing units to help curb crime.</p> <p>She spent a decade on the NYPD's plainclothes unit and reflected on how some units, such as ones that aren't in marked cop cars and don't respond to 911 calls for service, are able to dedicate efforts to knowing their community.</p> <p>"They were basically doing research on who in this community is the one that is most likely to commit this violent act or who has a history of or who's on parole or probation ... they were out there gathering intelligence in the field," she said of proactive policing. "And they were seeking out those alpha male targets, the ones that are most likely going to engage in violent crime."</p> <p>Meyers noted that at least for now, more people "absolutely" need to be incarcerated to curb crime.</p> <p>"Crime tends always to be concentrated among a very few, repeat offenders (and in specific locations). Unless we return to incapacitating those individuals in jails and prisons, they will, without question, keep offending — which further creates an atmosphere of crime-without-consequence that encourages others to offend as well," she said.</p>
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